

State of North Carolina
Division of Archives and History

Wilkes COUNTY

Wilkesboro QUAD

INDIVIDUAL PROPERTY FORM FOR

Historic Resources of Wilkesboro (Partial Inventory, ~~Historic & Architectural Properties~~)

MULTIPLE RESOURCE OR THEMATIC NOMINATION

1 NAME

HISTORIC
Wilkesboro Presbyterian Church

AND/OR COMMON
Wilkesboro Presbyterian Church

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER
205 E. Main Street

NOT FOR PUBLICATION
CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

CITY, TOWN
Wilkesboro

VICINITY OF

STATE
N.C.

CODE

COUNTY
Wilkes

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 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 |
| | N/A | <input type="checkbox"/> NO | <input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY | <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER |

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME
Wilkesboro Presbyterian Church

STREET & NUMBER
c/o North Wilkesboro Presbyterian Church, cor. of E & 8th Sts.

CITY, TOWN
North Wilkesboro

VICINITY OF

STATE
N. C.

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC
Wilkes County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER
Courthouse Square

CITY, TOWN
Wilkesboro

STATE
N. C.

6 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE
Laura A. W. Phillips, Consultant

ORGANIZATION
for Wilkesboro Historic Properties Commission

DATE
May 1980

STREET & NUMBER
CITY OR TOWN
Wilkesboro, N. C.

TELEPHONE
STATE

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD | <input type="checkbox"/> RUINS | <input checked="" 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 Wilkesboro Presbyterian Church sits far back on its lot facing E. Main Street.

While an expansive lawn and tall trees provide a serene atmosphere to the front of the church, this feeling of being somewhat set apart is interrupted by the presence of a low, one-story brick dentist's office located approximately twelve feet from the east side of the church.

Built in 1849-1850, the church is an excellent example of the chaste Greek Revival temple form popular during the mid-nineteenth century. The dark red brick walls, laid in five-to-one common bond, provide a contrast to the stark whiteness of the tetrastyle Doric portico and other trim. A slightly incongruous effect is created by the small bellfry of simple late Victorian design which replaced an early bellfry surmounting the church. Plain simplicity is characteristic of this church with its smooth brick walls, stuccoed brick columns and flush-boarded pediment. The wall surfaces are punctuated only by the nine-over-nine sash windows and double-leaf, paneled front door with long strap hinges and five-light transom. A note of refinement is seen in the slightly projecting water table headed by a row of narrow vertical slots in the brickwork which provide ventilation for the crawl space under the building.

The interior of Wilkesboro Presbyterian Church rivals the exterior in its chasteness. Plain plastered walls team up with the flush boarded ceiling and windows with deep reveals and plain surrounds to create an appearance of utter simplicity. The pews and pulpit furniture presently in the church are not original and are said by local residents to be those which were used in the North Wilkesboro Presbyterian Church during its early years. Tradition states that a slave gallery once ran across the rear (north end) of the church and that it was entered by means of a doorway located on the east side of the church near the northeast corner. However, the only evidence which remains is a bricked-up doorway at this location on the exterior wall.

For some years during the twentieth century services were not held in the church and the building deteriorated. Then during the 1960s the brickwork was repointed and repairs with slight modifications were made to the boxed cornice. At this time the thin, shelf-like abacus of each column capital was boxed in, giving a much heavier effect and presumably acting as a pigeon deterrent.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

_____ NATIONAL _____ STATE X LOCAL

| 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/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 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 1849-1850 BUILDER/ARCHITECT Dameron

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Wilkesboro Presbyterian Church, established in 1837, is the oldest congregation of this denomination in twenty-one western North Carolina counties. Built in 1849-1850, the small brick building with tetrastyle Doric portico is an excellent example of the chaste, temple-like Greek Revival style popular during the mid-nineteenth century across America. The well-preserved structure is one of only a few which remain from the pre-Civil War development period in Wilkesboro.

CRITERIA ASSESSMENT

- A. The Wilkesboro Presbyterian Church is one of the few remaining buildings associated with the pre-Civil War development of the county seat town of Wilkesboro. The oldest congregation of the Presbyterian church in twenty-one western North Carolina counties, the church played a significant role in the spread of this prominent denomination in this part of the state.
- C. The Wilkesboro Presbyterian Church, with its tetrastyle Doric portico and simplicity of form and detail, embodies the distinctive characteristics of the Greek Revival style so popular in mid-nineteenth century America.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

According to the Presbyterian Synod's Record Book and the Minute Book of the 1967 Presbyterian General Assembly, the Wilkesboro Presbyterian Church is the oldest congregation of this denomination in twenty-one western North Carolina counties. It was organized on June 17, 1837 with six charter members -- all prominent in the community. These were John Finley and his wife Ellen Tate (he was a merchant, a trustee of the Wilkesboro Academy and later a trustee of the Wilkesboro Seminary); Collin Stevens and his wife Frances (he was treasurer of the Wilkesboro Seminary trustees); and Alexander A. Hall and his wife Martha, both of whom took charge of the Wilkesboro Seminary in 1837. For many years the congregation was served by circuit-riding preachers from Concord Presbytery and services were probably held in the homes of the various members.

By 1849 the congregation was ready for a building of its own. On May 7, 1849 Augustus W. Finley purchased a lot on Main Street for the purpose of building a Presbyterian church. This lot was held in trust for the congregation. A letter written by Dr. A. A. Scroggs to Dr. Robert Franklin Hackett on December 26, 1849 says that "The contract for the Presbyterian Church at Wilkesboro was let to old Dameron for one thousand and forty dollars. It is to be a brick building, with big pillars in front." Little is known about the man named Dameron, except that D. Dameron also held the contract for the construction of St. Paul's Episcopal Church, a brick Gothic Revival structure completed in Wilkesboro in July 1849. Apparently when the church was first built it did not have a spire or bellfry. However, before he died in 1864, General James B. Gordon had a spire built on the church and donated the bell, on which is inscribed, "Molded in Philadelphia in 1849." By the late nineteenth century, though, this spire or bellfry had decayed, and Col W. H. H. Cowles had the present one built to replace it.

On July 29, 1893 sixteen active members withdrew from the Wilkesboro church to become charter members of the North Wilkesboro Presbyterian Church. This crucial event signaled the beginning of a long decline in the size of the Wilkesboro congregation as more and more people became affiliated with the new church in North Wilkesboro. Finally services ceased to be held at the Wilkesboro church altogether and over a period of years in the twentieth century the building was allowed to deteriorate. After mid-century, however, interest was revived in the church and necessary repairs to the structure were made so that once again the building is well-maintained by an active, though small congregation.

(continued)

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

- Finley, Elizabeth. "Wilkesboro Has Oldest Presbyterian Church in Northwest Area." Journal Patriot (North Wilkesboro). Bicentennial Edition, 1976.
- Harris, Mrs. W. E. "Wilkesboro and Her Churches." Unpublished report, ca. 1933.
- Wilkes County Deeds, Office of the Register of Deeds, Wilkes County Courthouse, Wilkesboro, N. C.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY less than 1

UTM REFERENCES

| | | | | | | | |
|---|------|------------------|---------------------|---|------|---------|----------|
| A | 1, 2 | 4, 8, 6, 5, 2, 0 | 4, 0, 0, 0, 2, 0, 0 | B | | | |
| | ZONE | EASTING | NORTHING | | ZONE | EASTING | NORTHING |
| C | | | | D | | | |

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The property being nominated includes Parcel 11 of Block 3, ^{Tax} Map 103, measuring approximately 90 x 263 x 63 x 127 x 27 x 136 feet. (Town of Wilkesboro.)

This property is composed of the church and lot on which it stands.

NORTH WILKESBORO

Wilkesboro MRN
Wilkesboro, N. C. Quadrangle
Zone 17 Scale 1:24000

Thomas B. Finley Law Office
17 486400/4000280

Wilkesboro-Smithey Hotel
17 486405/4000240

St. Paul's Episcopal Church
17 486050/4000310

Brown-Cowles House and Cowles Law Office
17 486470/4000300

J. L. Hemphill House
485180/4000070

Wilkesboro Presbyterian Church
17 486520/4000200

Johnson-Hubbard House
17 486420/40002000

J. T. Ferguson Store
17 486400/4000190

Federal Building
17 486150/4000120



