UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

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INVENTORY	NOMINATION	FORM DA	ATE ENTERED	
SEE	NSTRUCTIONS IN <i>HOW</i> T TYPE ALL ENTRIES			MS
NAME				
HISTORIC				
	esbyterian Church		ì	
AND/OR COMMON				
Same				
LOCATION				
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S.R. 1762, near	Brown Marsh		NOT FOR PUBLICATION	N
CITY, TOWN			CONGRESSIONAL DI	STRICT
Clarkton	<u>_</u>	VICINITY OF	3rd	,
state North Carolina		37	county Bladen	017
CLASSIFICA	ATION			
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X_BUILDING(S)	X PRIVATE	_XUNOCCUPIED	COMMERCIAL	PARK
STRUCTURE	ВОТН	WORK IN PROGRESS	EDUCATIONAL	
SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	ENTERTAINME	NT X_RELIGIOUS
OBJECT	IN PROCESS	_YES: RESTRICTED	GOVERNMENT	SCIENTIFIC
	BEING CONSIDERED	YES: UNRESTRICTED	INDUSTRIAL	_TRANSPORTATION
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OWNER OF	PROPERTY	inigililit e Parlamente, emercente lla contra Deriva VIII estre empresario del Casti a circle V		
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NAME Wilmington Pres	hart ora) · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·	· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·
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REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ET	c. Bladen County Cou	rthouse		
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SURVEY RECORDS .	:			
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CONDITION

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DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Brown Marsh Presbyterian Church, a small frame building, is located on a knoll above Brown Marsh Creek in a grove of oak and cedar trees. A graveyard containing about 200 gravestones, with the oldest inscribed stone dated 1786, encircles the church. The weathered, extremely plain rectangular building, five bays wide and three deep, rests on a low brick foundation and is capped by a gable roof covered with wooden shingles.

The building shows no sign of having ever been painted, and the wood surfaces have developed a mossy patina. Some of the siding is beaded; the rest is plain. The north side and west gable-end elevations each contain a central entrance, and it is unclear which served originally as the main facade. The north entrance, which appears to be the earliest, consists of a batten door in a plain surround. The west entrance is a double door, each leaf with three raised panels, surmounted by a two-pane transom and set in a plain surround. The flanking bays of these elevations and the south and east elevations contain nine-over-nine sash windows with plain surrounds, each covered with a batten shutter. Most of the shutters have HL hinges. The eaves are finished quite simply, with a plain box cornice enclosing the longitudinal eaves and a plain flush raking cornice finishing the gable ends.

The interior contains one large room with the pulpit centered against the east wall and a gallery abutting the west wall. All of the interior surfaces are covered with unpainted flush wood sheathing. The wide, beaded ceiling sheathing is perhaps original, for the inscription "Thos. Sheridan 1828" (or 1818) is written in chalk on the ceiling in the northeast corner. According to church tradition this is the signature of the carpenter and the construction date of the building. The walls are covered with narrow sheathing which is apparently a late nineteenth century replacement. It is arranged vertically below a plain chair rail and horizontally above the wainscot. Wide plain boards form the floor.

The pulpit, which appears to be quite old, is a high, polygonal, three-sided box constructed of wide beaded sheathing like that of the ceiling. A small shelf at the top forms the lectern, and the top edge of the pulpit is finished with a molding. Three small wooden steps on the south side of the pulpit ascend to the standing platform. The pews consist of crude plank benches with slat backs which appear to be of recent vintage. They are arranged loosely in two rows with an east-west and a north-south center aisle. The benches in the west half of the building face east, toward the pulpit, and the benches flanking the pulpit face inward to the pulpit. In the center of the north-south aisle is a Victorian cast-iron stove with a metal flue which exits through the south wall to the outside.

The gallery is supported on plain wood posts, and narrow, vertical sheathing like that of the walls forms the gallery railing. A narrow open-string stair ascends in the southwest corner to the gallery. The newness of the gallery fabric and the constriction of gallery space due to the low ceiling height indicate that it is a later addition.

Around the church is a picturesque churchyard, with several noteworthy tombstones. The oldest grave marker, of "John Gessep" dated 1786, is an upright granite slab with

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with an arched top. A primitive, stylized male head with wings ornaments the arched area above the inscription, and panels of stylized acanthus ornament flank the inscription. The stone is typical of eighteenth century New England gravestones, and is highly unusual for North Carolina. A large number of unpainted uninscribed wooden markers in varying shapes, the basic form being a rectangular wooden slab surmounted by a lozenge shaped or round-arched finial, are found in the cemetery. The signs of weathering indicate that these markers are very old. These early, anonymous markers are found throughout Bladen County.

PERIOD	AF	REAS OF SIGNIFICANCE CH	IECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW	
PREHISTORIC	ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	COMMUNITY PLANNING	LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<u>X</u> RELIGION
1400-1499	ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	CONSERVATION	_LAW	SCIENCE
1500-1599	AGRICULTURE	ECONOMICS	LITERATURE	SCULPTURE
_1600-1699	ARCHITECTURE	EDUCATION	MILITARY	SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
_1700-1799	ART	ENGINEERING	MUSIC	THEATER
图1800-1899	COMMERCE	EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	PHILOSOPHY	TRANSPORTATION
1900-	COMMUNICATIONS	INDUSTRY	POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	_OTHER (SPECIFY)
		INVENTION		
SPECIFIC DAT	ES 1828	BUILDER/ARCH	HITECT Thomas Sher	idan

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

In the mid-eighteenth century, the Upper Cape Fear River valley was settled by Scots immigrants who established Presbyterian congregations and later built modest churches; these were still later replaced by more ambitious Greek Revival style buildings. Brown Marsh Presbyterian Church, built before 1828, and thus the oldest church in Bladen County, is thought to be the only remaining example of the simple, pre-Greek Revival churches built by the Scots Presbyterians who dominated the region's history. The small frame church and its cemetery with many early grave markers are preserved as a shrine by the Presbyterians of the region.

The Brown Marsh Presbyterian Church was constructed between 1805 and 1828 just east of the Brown Marsh Swamp near Clarkton, Bladen County. It is the oldest Presbyterian church in that county.

The Brown Marsh congregation existed at least as early as February 3, 1795, the earliest recorded date of that body's session meetings and may have been in existence before that time. A cemetery surrounding the church includes a grave marker dated 1786. It has been suggested that the congregation existed as early as February, 1756, when Reverend Hugh McAden, an itenerant Presbyterian minister, recorded that he "rode to Esquire McNeill's, where he /McAden/ preached to a small congregation..." Esquire McNeill is believed to have resided near the Brown Marsh.

The Brown Marsh congregation was affiliated with the Orange Presbytery until 1812 (when it became part of the Fayetteville Presbytery). Unfortunately all the records of the Orange Presbytery's first twenty-five years (1770-1795) were destroyed by fire in 1827. It is certain, however, that some form of chapel existed at Brown Marsh before 1805. In June of that year John Blue, a member of the congregation, sold to the "congregational Proprietors of the lately erected Chapel or house of divine worship deemed the Brown Marsh Chapel . . . " a two-acre tract of land "to be appropriated solely & wholly to the use & benefit of building a chapel for the purpose of supporting a Presbyterian church order for the use & purpose of Presbyterianism. . . . " The wording of this conveyance implies that some type of building, whether temporary or permanent, was in use by the congregation before 1805. Precisely when the "new" chapel was built between 1805 and 1828 is uncertain, but an inscription written in chalk on the structure's ceiling, "Tho Sheridan 1828" (or 1818), suggests completion during one of those two years. (Thomas Sheridan \sqrt{ca} . 1738-1864/ is listed as a carpenter in the 1850 census of Bladen County.) The fact that the church was dedicated December 13, 1828, strongly suggests that year as the completion date.

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The congregation of Brown Marsh Presbyterian Church, like others in the area, was composed largely of descendants of the Scots settlers who dominated the Upper Cape Fear Valley numerically and culturally. After the Scots defeat at Culloden, pardon was offered to rebels who would take an oath of allegiance and emigrate to America. The largest number of these went to North Carolina, settling primarily along the Upper Cape Fear; they were in fact the only large group to come to North Carolina directly from their native land. The names recorded in the Brown Marsh congregation's marriage roster suggest their Scots character: Neill McKay and Katherine Ray (1815), Neill MacColl and Mary MacNeill (1816), George Ballantine and Ann MacColl (1818), Dougald MacKeithan and Mary McColl (1819), Angus Clark and Flora McKeithan (1821), Archibald Shaw and Mary Campbell (1822), and others.

The 1828 Brown Marsh chapel remained in continuous use until 1871, when a new house of worship was constructed closer to Clarkton. The congregation's session resolved to "instruct the Trustees of Brown Marsh Church to close the old Brown Marsh Edifice, which is now open, and fasten the same with lock & key, and suffer no person . . . to occupy or use the same without lieve of this Session." This action produced a rift in the congregation and some members continued to worship in the old chapel until 1873. The old church building was apparently then vacated.

In the autumn of 1885 the new church's name was changed from Brown Marsh to Clarkton Presbyterian Church. In October, 1910, Oscar L. Clark and his wife Cora conveyed to the trustees of Clarkton Presbyterian Church a one-acre lot in the town of Clarkton "for the purpose of erecting Presbyterian Church on same." The new building was "practically completed" by the autumn of 1911. In November, 1911, the 1828 Brown Marsh chapel was reopened to a newly-formed congregation. Several members of the Clarkton Presbyterian Church became members of this new congregation, which remained in existence until 1949. Whether it met in the old Brown Marsh chapel during this entire period is uncertain; the building has remained vacant since that time but is preserved by the region's Presbyterians.

A full inventory of Bladen County revealed that Brown Marsh is the oldest church building there, among the earliest extant structures in the county, and perhaps the chief early landmark connected with the Scots Presbyterians vital to the area's history.

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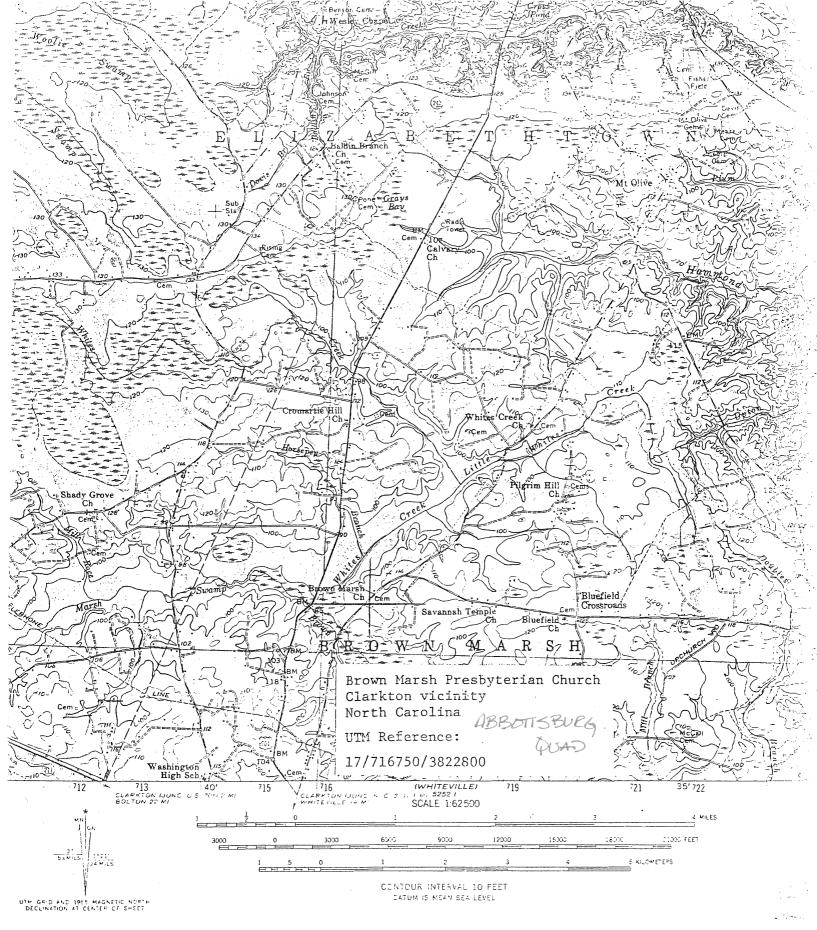
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THIS MAP COMPUTES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS

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