United States Department of the Interior National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only received date entered

state NC

Raleigh

city, town

II BACK	me			
historic	Griers Presbyt	terian Church and Ceme	tery	
and/or commo	on			
2. Loc	cation			
street & numb	ber N side SR 1710.	0.6 mi. Northeast of	jct. with NC 119	not for publication
city, town		<u>x</u> vicinity of Fro	ogsboro	
state North	n Carolina c	ode ⁰³⁷ county	Caswell	code 033
3. Cla	ssification			
Category districtx building(s structure _x site object	•	Status X occupied unoccupied work in progress Accessible X yes: restricted yes: unrestricted no	Present Use agriculture commercial educational entertainment government industrial military	museum park private residence religious scientific transportation and other: ceremony
4. Ow	ner of Prope	erty		
name Mr.	Frank Smith, Clerk	of Session		
street & numb	er Griers Presbyt	erian Church, Rt. 1		
city, town	Leasburg	vicinity of	state	NC 27291
	ation of Leg	gal Descriptio	n	
5. Loc			of Doods	
courthouse, re	egistry of deeds, etc. Cas	well County Register c	or Deeds	
courthouse, re	er	well County Register c		NC
courthouse, re street & number	er Yanceyville		state 1	NC
courthouse, restreet & numbereity, town 6. Rep	er Yanceyville	n in Existing S	state 1	

7. Description

Conditionexcellentdeterioratedx goodruinsfairunexposed	x altered	Check one X original site moved date	
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Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

One of five antebellum church buildings extant in Caswell County, the ca. 1856 Griers? Presbyterian Church near Frogsboro survives in its isolated setting as a simple but well-executed example of Greek Revival temple-form church architecture, set in a rural context. It is a simple, rectangular frame building, resting on a replacement low cinder block foundation, one bay wide and two bays deep, covered by a front gable roof of standing seam tin with a boxed cornice and wide returns. In form and detail, it is quite similar to the earlier Yanceyville Presbyterian Church (1850, Yanceyville Historic District), which has led to speculation that it was built by contractor Alfred A. Mitchell, who has been documented as the builder of the Yanceyville church. Elements in common include the basic temple form of the churches, the two-part crossetted window and door surrounds, and the interior plan with galleries along each side supported by classical posts and fronted by a low, recessed, paneled retaining wall. The principal difference between the two is building material, the Yanceyville church being of brick construction, while Grier's is frame.

The entrance, which is centered on the facade, consists of double-leaf doors of five horizontal panels each, capped by a four-light transom, all set in a two-part crossetted surround. (The transom was added in 1930, while the doors date from the 1950s.) Centered above the entrance is a large louvered vent in a pointed surround. The architrave surround treatment is repeated on the side elevations where it frames large nine-overnine double-hung sash windows. Smaller windows were cut near the front of the side elevations during the 1930s; they contain six-over-six sash in flat surrounds. Also during the 1930s, a three-sided projecting chancel was built onto the rear of the church; two-over-two windows are set in the two sides of this chancel.

The entrance leads to a vestibule, which contains open-string staircases at each end rising to the galleries which extend along each side of the sanctuary. These galleries are supported by square tapered posts with classical capitals and feature a low, recessed, paneled retaining wall with a molded base. The main floor of the sanctuary contains two ranks of nine pews, separated by a center aisle. Under the galleries, four pews face the center of the church and are perpendicular to the main sections of pews. At the chancel end, a choir area on each side was enclosed with low paneled walls in the 1950s; these areas contain pews, straight chairs, and pianos.

A rectangular platform extends into the sanctuary from the chancel bay; at the front of the platform is an unusual curvilinear bracked pulpit flanked by simple chairs in front of the windows. In front of the platform, two identical chairs rest on either side of a wooden communion table, and a wooden baptismal font stands to the side.

The dominant feature of the sanctuary is a large, ornate Victorian gas chandelier, later converted to electricity. Interior trim includes flush window surrounds with cornerblocks; low, flush baseboards; and molded window sills. Three double-leaf, single-panel doors lead to the sanctuary from the vestibule, while single-leaf, two-panel doors open from the stairwell to the galleries. Portions of the vestibule were enclosed in the 1930s for use as Sunday School classrooms; it was at this time that the small six-over-six windows were added. Three distinct types of pews occur in the sanctuary. On the main floor, the pews have curvilinear end panels, while the galleries contain simple benches with slat backs and box pews. The floor retains its original planking, but the board ceiling has been covered with accoustical tile.

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In the mid 1950s, a one-story concrete block education building was constructed to the north of the church. Topped by a low-pitched gable roof, this structure does not contribute to the significance of the property.

The property also inclues the church cemetery which extends eastward behind the church and contains weathered grave markers typical of the mid-19th to early 20th centuries.

8. Significance

Period prehistoric 1400–1499 1500–1599 1600–1699 1700–1799 1800–1899 1900–	agriculture architecture	community planning conservation economics education engineering exploration/settlement	Iandscape architectur Iaw Iiterature Indicates	e X religion science sculpture social/ humanitarian theater transportation other (specify)
Specific dates	Unknown	Builder/Architect	Unknown	

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Griers Presbyterian Church in rural Caswell County is a simple but well-detailed Greek Revival temple-form building housing a congregation organized in 1753, during the early settlement period of the county. It is the oldest established congregation in the county and in the Orange Presbytery. One of only five antebellum churches surviving in the county, it is a handsome example of rural Boom Era (1840-1860) architecture in this predominantly rural county whose economy during that period was based on the cultivation of burley and later bright-leaf tobacco which created a substantial planter class. The property also contains a cemetery with the graves of church members marked by weathered tombstones typical of the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Criteria Assessment

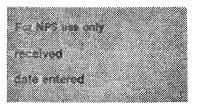
- A. Is associated with the early settlement of the area of north central North Carolina which became Caswell County and the establishment of a small number of churches in the pre-Revolutionary War era.
- C. Is a handsome and relatively intact example of a rural Greek revival temple-form church.
- D. Is likely to yield information important in our history.

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Griers Presbyterian Church, organized in the mid-eighteenth century, is the oldest congregation in Caswell County and the oldest Presbyterian church in Orange Presbytery. The church building, a simple and well-preserved Greek Revival structure built in 1856, is one of only five antebellum churches surviving in the county. The church is located in the Hightowers community eight miles east of Yanceyville.

According to a recent county history, "except for the Anglican chapels of the colonial period, the earliest congregation in Caswell County apparently was Presbyterian." Griers Church is thought to have been organized by 1753 while two other Presbyterian congregations in the county, Red House Church and Bethesda Church, predate the Revolu-The Baptists were the only other denomination organized in the area prior to the Revolution. Local tradition credits the founding of Griers Church to Samuel Bell, a staunch Presbyterian from Pennsylvania who settled on the banks of Hyco Creek in Orange County, now Caswell County; the church was originally known as Upper Hyco Meeting House. In 1755, the Reverend Mr. Hugh McAden (d. 1781), the first Presbyterian missionary to North Carolina, preached to several congregations in the area including one at Hyco which is thought to have been the predecessor of Griers Church. was without a regular minister until 1768 when McAden was called to the church where he served until his death in 1781. McAden, a 1753 graduate of the College of New Jersey (now Princeton), was sent by the New Castle Presbytery as a missionary to North Carolina in 1755. From 1757 until 1768, McAden lived and worked in Duplin and New Hanover counties before moving to serve the Griers Church congregation. McAden was an important figure in the organization of the Presbyterian Church in North Carolina, and he has been described as "one of the chief founders of the Presbyterian Church in the South.

After the death of McAden in 1781, the congregation was without a regular minister until the Reverend Mr. William Moore was called to the church in 1790 where he served until 1801. In 1797, the church purchased a one-and-three-quarter acre plot of land from James Richmond and Ann Greer "for the purpose of building a Meeting House." It is thought that this church site was within a few miles of the present church. Sometime between May of 1809 and September of 1810, the congregation changed its name from Upper Hyco Meeting House to Griers (often spelled Greers) Church. Local tradition claims that the new name was chosen in honor of Ann Greer, from whom the church property had been purchased at a nominal price of forty shillings.

During the early part of the nineteenth century, the membership of the church was apparently very small and often unable to support a minister. The records of the Orange Presbytery show that the church shared a minister with several other small Presbyterian churches in the county, and that services were only held once a month. In 1810, an observer noted that in Caswell County there were four Presbyterian congregations with a membership of 200 or 250; at the same time there were four Baptist churches with about 300 members and three or four Methodist societies with 250 or 300 members. During the tenure of Reverend Samuel Paisley from 1829 to 1831, the membership of Griers Church grew from thirty to fifty-two. Probably as a result of this growth the congregation purchased a three-and-one-half acre plot about a mile from the present church and built a new structure. Only the abandoned church cemetery, with stones dating from the 1830s and 1840s, remains at this site.

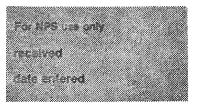
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In 1850, Reverend John S. Grasty (1825-1883) was called as the pastor of both Griers Church and the Yanceyville Presbyterian Church. As soon as Grasty became pastor of the Yanceyville church, he began plans there to build a new church. In 1850, the Yanceyville congregation erected a handsome temple-form structure built of brick; the church was designed by Dr. Nathaniel Roan of Yanceyville and was constructed by builder Alfred A. Mitchell. During Reverend Grasty's tenure, the existing Griers Church building burned. In 1856, the Griers Church congregation purchased a two-acre lot on the road from Frogsborough, a nearby community. to Yanceyville for \$135, "together with benefit of a spring... for both persons and horses...," and built the present church. The church is a frame duplicate of the brick Yanceyville Presbyterian Church, although Griers Church is slightly larger and simpler in detail. Both buildings are temple-form structures, one bay wide and two bays deep, with identical crossetted trim around the openings. The interior arrangement and woodwork of both churches is nearly identical. The similarity of the two buildings suggests that the Griers Church congregation also engaged builder Alfred A. Mitchell to build their church, and that Mitchell, perhaps at Grasty's suggestion, used the Yanceyville church as his model. Griers Church is a large and substantial church structure for rural North Carolina, but it is a simple building in comparison with Caswell County's finer antebellum domestic buildings and the pretentious brick churches in Yanceyville and Milton. The financial limitations of the church's small congregation, made up largely of farm families with modest holdings, probably dictated the building's simplicity.

Reverend Grasty left the Griers congregation in 1857 and was succeeded by Reverend Jacob Doll (1812-1878) who also served the Yanceyville Presbyterian Church. Reverend Doll was prominent in the work of the Orange Presbytery, serving at various times as clerk and moderator of the presbytery. In 1857, Doll reported to the presbytery that Griers Church had a Sunday School and thirty-three communicants, four of them being black. At the time of the 1860 census, there were six Presbyterian churches in Caswell County with their church buildings valued at \$12,800. At the same time, there were twelve Methodist churches with buildings worth \$12,650 and twelve Baptist churches with buildings valued at only \$10,500. Apparently the Presbyterian denomination, aside from being the oldest in the county, was the most prosperous and best housed church body in Caswell County.

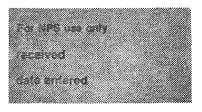
After Reverend Doll left the church in 1862, the congregation was without a regular pastor until 1884; by 1870, the membership of the church had dropped to twelve. Beginning with the pastorate of Reverend James L. Currie in 1884, the church membership began to increase. By 1904, under the leadership of Reverend Joseph Evans, the church membership reached the unsurpassed high of seventy-three. The present membership of the church is about fifty active members. In 1893, Griers Church sponsored a Sunday School at the Pleasant Grove community about three miles west of the church; this led to the establishment of the Pleasant Grove Presbyterian Church in 1904 and the two churches currently share the same pastor. In 1951, the Greers Church was extensively repaired. The plaster of the sanctuary was renewed, acoustical tile was applied over the pine plank ceiling, and the deteriorated rock foundation was replaced by one of concrete blocks. In the late 1950s, a small concrete block educational building was

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constructed in the churchyard east of the church. In 1959, the North Carolina Highway Historical Marker Advisory Committee approved the erection of a marker for the church.

Griers Presbyterian Church continues to house one of the oldest Presbyterian congregations in piedmont North Carolina. The simple Greek Revival church building, one of the few antebellum churches surviving in the county, serves as a well-preserved reminder of the long presence of the Presbyterian denomination in Caswell County.

FOOTNOTES

William S. Powell, When the Past Refused to Die, A History of Caswell County,
North Carolina, 1777-1977 (Durham, NC: Moore Publishing Company, 1977), 434, hereinafter cited as Powell, Caswell County; Robert Hamlin Stone, A History of Orange
Presbytery. Orange Presbytery was established in 1770 and originally included the
whole of North Carolina. Presently it includes Caswell, Rockingham, Guilford, Alamance,
Orange, Randolph, Chatham, and Lee counties.

The other antebellum churches are the old Red House Presbyterian Church, a small frame structure built in 1809 and now used for a barn; the brick Yanceyville Presbyterian Church built 1850; the brick Milton Presbyterian Church constructed in 1837; and the brick Milton Baptist Meeting House built before 1844. See Ruth Little-Stokes, An Inventory of Historic Architecture, Caswell County, North Carolina (Caswell County Historical Association, Inc., and the Division of Archives and History, North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, 1979), 135, 202, 217, 222, hereinafter cited as Little-Stokes, Historic Architecture.

Powell, Caswell County, 433.

⁴Powell, Caswell County, 434-436.

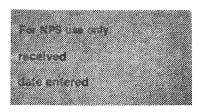
5"Historical Sketch of Griers Presbyterian Church, Caswell County, N.C.," typescript, 1, copy in the Griers Church file, Survey and Planning Branch, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh, hereinafter cited as "Historical Sketch of Griers Church." This anonymous eight-page history appears to be thorough and accurate in regard to dates, membership figures, and names of ministers and ruling elders from 1753 until about 1935. The history is not footnoted and does not include a bibliography, but the writer refers several times to the Orange Presbytery records at the Presbyterian Historical Foundation at Montreat, North Carolina. In 1960, the North Carolina Department of Archives and History erected a highway historical marker in recognition of the church. Correspondence concerning this action includes a letter of 15 August 1956 from the Reverend Carl May, pastor of the church, to the Department of Archives and History requesting the marker and enclosing a one-page history of the church. This short history was "a condensation of a history written some years ago by one of our members after studying available records, including those at Montreat, North Carolina, where our church has an Historical Foundation." It would seem that the anonymous typescript is the history referred to by the Reverend May, see the file for Griers Church, G 77, Research Branch, Divison of Archives and History, Raleigh.

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For information on the Reverend McAden, see "Historical Sketch of Griers Church," 1; Stone, Orange Presbytery, 17-21; William L. Saunders, ed., The Colonial Records of North Carolina (Raleigh: State of North Carolina, 10 volumes, 1886-1890), V, 1198-1213. The Reverend McAden kept a journal, now lost, of his travels in North Carolina in 1755-1757 which was partially transcribed in the Reverend William Henry Foote's Sketches of North Carolina, Historical and Biographical. . . . (New York: Robert Carter, 1846).

7 Stone, Orange Presbytery, 17.

⁸James Richmond and Ann Greer to Samuel McMurry and Thomas Wiley, 2 September 1797, Caswell County Deeds, Book K, 134, microfilm copy, Archives, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh, hereinafter cited as Caswell County Deeds.

9"Historical Sketch of Griers Church," 2.

10 Powell, Caswell County, 432.

"Historical Sketch of Griers Church," 3.

Abner Stanfield and Robert Love to James Currie, Sr., et al Elders, 1835, Caswell County Deeds, Book

13 Katherine Kerr Kendall, Yanceyville Presbyterian Church (Raleigh: Sparks Press, 1976), 2, hereinafter cited as Kendall, Yanceyville Presbyterian Church.

14 Kendall, Yanceyville Presbyterian Church, 2-3.

David Burch to Thomas Covington, et al Trustees, 2 July 1856, Caswell County Deeds, Book II, 270. The spring was located about 200 yards to the west of the church lot.

16 An examination of the 1860 census for residents living near the Hightowers post office, that nearest the church, shows that most were farmers with holdings valued at less than \$10,000. Ruth Little-Stokes' inventory of buildings in Leasburg and Hightower townships, which surround the church, records only a handful of substantial two-story dwellings with any architectural pretention, the great majority of the surviving antebellum structures being modest story-and-a-half farmhouses. The only known member of Griers Church of any local prominence was planter and church elder Elbridge G. Mitchell, whose holdings in 1860 totaled \$12,500. In 1868, Mitchell built a large plantation house in the Italianate style near the church and, in 1875, he was instrumental in chartering the Norfolk, Roxboro' and Greensboro' Railroad Company which was to run through Caswell County. See Powell, Caswell County, 505; Little-Stokes, Historic Architecture, 64; Eighth Census of the United States, 1860: Caswell County, North Carolina, Population Schedule, 94, Archives, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh.

17 Kerr, Yanceyville Presbyterian Church, 6; "Historical Sketch of Griers Church," 3.

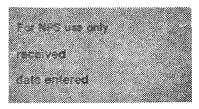
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Minutes of the One Hundred and Seventy-Fifth Session of Orange Presbytery (Richmond: Charles H. Wynne, 1857), 14.

¹⁹ Powell, Caswell County, 433.

^{20&}quot;Historical Sketch of Griers Church," 4.

²¹"Historical Sketch of Griers Church," 5.

²²Information on the 1951 repairs and the building of the educational building was received in a telephone conversation of 30 November 1982 with Mrs. Minnie Margaret Butler, Route 3, Box 215, Burlington, North Carolina 27215.

²³See file for Griers Presbyterian Church in the Research Branch, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh.

9. Major Bibliographical References

see continuation sheet

10. Geographi	cal Data		
Acreage of nominated property	2		
Quadrangle name Ridgeville	<u>e</u>		Quadrangle scale 1:24,000
UT M References			
	0 21 3 71 21 0 rthing	B Zone Eastir	ng Northing
c	11111	D	
EIIIIIII		F	
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Verbal boundary description a			nominated consists of a 2-acre
parcel containing the chunid-20th century education List all states and counties fo	nal building.		emetery and a non-contributing
state N/A	code	county N/A	code
state	code	county	code
44 Earm Dram	arad Du		
11. Form Prepa		C	
Description - All name/title Historical signif			cher
organization N. C. Division	of Archives and	History date Au	ng. 30, 1985
street & number 109 E. Jones	St.	telephone	919/733-6545
city or town Raleigh		state	NC
12. State Histo	ric Prese	rvation Offi	cer Certification
The evaluated significance of this	property within the sta	ite is:	
national	state	∟ local	
As the designated State Historic Pi 665), I hereby nominate this proper according to the criteria and proce	ty for inclusion in the	National Register and cer	servation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89– tify that it has been evaluated
State Historic Preservation Officer	signature ///////	in Think	
title State Historic Pres	ervation Officer	. //	date October 10, 1985
For NPS use only			
I hereby certify that this prop	erty is included in the	National Register	
	and the second of the second		date
Keeper of the National Registe	<u> </u>		
Attest:			e date
Chief of Registration	•		400

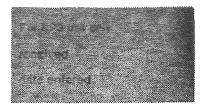
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Caswell County Deeds, microfilm copy, Archives, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh.

Eighth Census of the United States, 1860: Caswell County, North Carolina, Archives, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh.

Griers Presbyterian Church file, Research Branch, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh.

"Historical Sketch of Griers Presbyterian Church, Caswell County, N. C." Typescript, undated, copy in the Survey and Planning Branch, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh.

Kendall, Katherine Kerr. Yanceyville Presbyterian Church. Raleigh: Sparks Press, 1976.

Little-Stokes, Ruth, comp. An Inventory of Historic Architecture, Caswell County, North Carolina. Caswell County Historical Association, Inc. and Division of Archives and History, North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, 1979.

Orange Presbytery. Minutes of the Sessions of Orange Presbytery, 1856-1859, 1882-1885. Various publishers and places of publication.

Powell, William S. When the Past Refused to Die, A History of Caswell County, North Carolina, 1777-1977. Durham, N.C.: Moore Publishing Company, 1977.

Saunders, William L., ed. The Colonial Records of North Carolina. Raleigh: State of North Carolina, 10 volumes, 1886-1890.

Stone, Robert Hamlin. A History of Orange Presbytery, 1770-1970. Greensboro, N.C.: N.p., 1970.

