

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: North Carolina	
COUNTY: Craven	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

1. NAME

COMMON:
Centenary Methodist Church

AND/OR HISTORIC:

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:
209 New Street

CITY OR TOWN:
New Bern (First Congressional District, The Hon. Walter B. Jones)

STATE: North Carolina CODE: 37 COUNTY: Craven CODE: 019

3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/> Object	<input type="checkbox"/> Public <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	Public Acquisition: <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> Educational <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <input type="checkbox"/> Military <input type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Park <input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____ _____ _____

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME:
Centenary Methodist Church

STREET AND NUMBER:
309 New Street

CITY OR TOWN: New Bern STATE: North Carolina CODE: 37

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.:
Craven County Courthouse

STREET AND NUMBER:
302 Broad Street

CITY OR TOWN: New Bern STATE: North Carolina CODE: 37

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY:

DATE OF SURVEY: Federal State County Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN: STATE: CODE:

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7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input type="checkbox"/> Unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (If known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Centenary Methodist Church, a turreted mass of irregular projections, is one of the last representatives in New Bern of the Romantic eclecticism which dominated late nineteenth century architecture. It heralds, however, through the unified interior flow of space and the monochromatic cleanliness of its exterior brick surfaces, the architectural aesthetics of the twentieth century.

The church is a multiple-use complex consisting of a wedge-shaped sanctuary which forms the main block, and side and rear projections, essentially rectangular in shape, surrounding the narrow end of the main wedge. These projections contain a chapel, nursery, Sunday school rooms, and offices. The building is angled on a site at the corner of Middle and New streets, and the main (northwest) facade encompasses both streets. The three front sides of the exterior are of buff-colored brick, while the rear walls are of red brick. The main sanctuary block is covered by a red slate hip roof, drawn at the eaves into apsidal projections. The side and rear projections are covered with hip roofs which intersect the roof of the main block. Ornamental galvanized iron coping accents the ridges of the roof, and iron finials occur on each apex. No two elevations are alike, and the structure presents a constantly changing appearance as viewed from different approaches.

In the center of the main facade is an entrance porch, composed of a semicircular five-bay arcade beneath a low conical roof. The round arches of the arcade are supported by thick stone columns with chamfered bases and cushion capitals. The conical porch roof features three gable dormers, each with round-headed stained glass windows flanked by pinnacled colonettes. Stone steps spill from the base of the porch.

Flanking the entrance porch are square corner towers of unequal height, the northeast tower rising in two stages and capped by a polygonal roof, and the taller northwest tower in three stages with a conical roof above an arcaded belfry. Both towers have bullet-shaped corner turrets of differing heights which echo the thrust of the towers themselves. Small windows of various shapes pierce both towers; the round-arched windows are accented by brick arches, the rectangular ones surmounted by rough textured granite lintels. Granite string courses articulate the tower stages as well as serving as sills for the windows in the first stage.

The north and west facades, formed by the apsidal projections of the main block, each with a band of three round-headed windows, terminate in shallow gabled pavilions. Each pavilion contains a very large round-headed window filled with stained glass. Behind this section, the chapel, meeting rooms, and offices are contained in an asymmetrical collection of rectangles and are illuminated by stained glass windows like those of the main facade and side projections. A polygonal cupola, each face containing a vent with scalloped louvers and the whole surmounted by a conical roof, projects from the roof apex above the chapel.

Entrance to the sanctuary is through a vestibule with paneled wainscots covering the walls. The corner towers at either end of the vestibule contain stairs which rise in two flights to the rear balcony. The stairwell space

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7. A

in each tower is dramatized by a truss framework of chamfered beams placed at the ceiling level.

In 1965 the New Bern architectural firm of Stephens and Cardelli began a major renovation of the interior of Centenary Methodist Church, and the minor but significant changes resulted in a further dramatization of the already fluid space produced by the juxtaposition of wall shapes and roof planes. As originally designed the wedge-shaped sanctuary contained three sections of pews curved around an altar located in the southeast corner. An arcade with wooden columns supporting plaster arches of various shapes separated the altar with the choir stall to the east and the main Sunday school room to the south from the rest of the sanctuary. The chancel arcade was simplified with the replacement of the wooden columns by plaster piers, and the arches were standardized. The south arcade no longer opens to the Sunday school room, but was partitioned to create a choir alcove which balances the choir alcove on the opposite side of the altar. A new altar arrangement was installed. The free-standing altar area consists of a raised rectangular platform encircled by an elegant metal railing. Harold Waggoner was responsible for the design of the railing and the metal cross suspended above the altar, the baptismal font, and the pews. The lighter tones of the new pews and woodwork and the increased lighting served to heighten the spaciousness of the sanctuary. A series of windows depicting the history of the local church in narrative sequence was placed in the wall separating the sanctuary and the vestibule. With the exception of the lighting, the sanctuary ceiling was not altered during this renovation, and it is especially noteworthy. At the junction of the apsidal front and side projections with the main roof, tent-like pendentives form a dramatic transition between the concavity of the apses and the flat ceiling of the auditorium. The exposed truss system, consisting of huge chamfered wooden beams connected by iron tie rods, creates a linear grid which is superimposed over the complex design of the ceiling.

The main Sunday school room was partitioned off from the sanctuary and a chapel created within the major portion of this large room by the addition of pews and a balcony. The space formerly occupied by small Sunday school classrooms was partitioned from the chapel by an arcaded plaster wall and now serves as a choir alcove. This starkly beautiful room is lit by the large round-headed stained glass window in the southeast wall and by a band of several smaller stained glass clerestory windows high on the south wall. A dropped ceiling of molded acoustic spray contains recessed lighting fixtures. The south border of the ceiling panel has scalloped projections which echo the curves of the individual clerestory windows. Twelve carved plaster plaques bearing symbols of the Apostles, designed by Stephens, are displayed on the northeast walls. The heavy carved communion table, which is placed in the center of the east end, is encircled by a wooden railing and a kneeling bench; and the pulpit stands near the north wall at the east end.

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7. B

The primary department largely retains its original appearance. The wooden pilastered mantels with carved foliated corbels supporting the shelves, the molded architraves of the windows, with splayed reveals, and the vertically sheathed wainscot remain intact. Much of the original richly carved wooden furniture is still in use.

The exterior appearance of the original structure was not altered, but a one-story structure to house additional classroom and office facilities was constructed in the rear.

8. SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- Pre-Columbian | 16th Century | 18th Century | 20th Century
 15th Century | 17th Century | 19th Century

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) 1904-1905

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- | | | | |
|--|---|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal | <input type="checkbox"/> Education | <input type="checkbox"/> Political | <input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry | <input type="checkbox"/> Science | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture | _____ |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature | <input type="checkbox"/> Theater | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commerce | <input type="checkbox"/> Military | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications | <input type="checkbox"/> Music | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation | | | |

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Although there was no established Methodist Church building in New Bern before the nineteenth century, there was some Methodist activity in the area in the mid-eighteenth century. George Whitfield preached there in 1739 and wrote that

At New Bern last Sunday, good impressions were made. From that place to this [New Brunswick] I have met with what they call New Lights. Almost every stage I have the names of six or eight of their preachers. This, with every other place being open, and exceedingly desirous to hear the Gospel, makes me almost determined to come back early in the Spring.

James Pilmoor preached there as early as 1772 and Bishop Francis Asbury as early as 1796. A Methodist congregation believed to have been formed in 1772 built Andrew's Chapel in 1802. The second church building in New Bern, it was constructed at the corner of Hancock Street and Church Alley. By 1843 the congregation showed sufficient increase to require a new structure, and a building was constructed on New Street between Hancock and Metcalf streets. The name was changed at that time to Centenary Methodist Church. By the time L. C. Vass wrote his history of the Presbyterian Church and the town of New Bern in 1886, he noted that the Methodists had the largest congregation in the city.

Even though the New Street church was enlarged about 1886, the need for a new building was apparent by 1900, and property at Middle and New streets was acquired from J. J. Wolfenden, one of the trustees of the church. The design for the church seems to have attracted a good deal of attention. The Journal noted in its edition of April 21, 1904, that the picture of the church would be on display at Davis Pharmacy, and in its edition of April 23 that "the picture of the new Centenary Church at Davis Pharmacy, is attracting a good deal of attention. The picture shows a very handsome church edifice." The cornerstone had probably already been laid by that time, for the Journal reported on May 8 that "the roof timbers of the new Methodist Church have been put in position on the South side of the building"

The plans of the church are said to be based on a New Jersey church designed by Charles Granville Jones of New York City. Drawings of that church were provided to Herbert Woodley Simpson of New Bern, and the working drawings and elevations of the New Bern church were developed. Eighteen sheets of drawings, including five elevations, still exist.

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Simpson was a local undertaker who had designed and built a house for W. B. Blades in 1903. That house, an excellent example of the Queen Anne Style, along with other houses which have since disappeared, probably brought Simpson the commission for the Centenary Methodist Church. Though Simpson and Jones are listed on the extant drawings as "Associated Architects," Simpson was the local architect and certainly responsible for the final drawings and construction supervision. The church was dedicated on October 22, 1905, and almost immediately dubbed in print as "a gem of modern architecture."

An educational building, designed by Raymond Fuson, was constructed on New Street to the rear of the church in 1956, and major renovation of the auditorium and chapel undertaken in 1965. This remodelling, for which Harold Waggoner of Philadelphia was the consulting architect and Robert Stephens of New Bern the architect, enhanced rather than compromised the original character of the interior.

Centenary Methodist Church is one of the major works of Herbert Simpson, New Bern's most important early twentieth century architect. Although based on another church, the massing and arrangement of the building testify to Simpson's ability to interpret the styles then in vogue. The exuberance of post-Victorian eclecticism (here combining elements of the Romanesque and Chateausque styles), and the emphatic asymmetry, exhibited so boldly in the irregular skyline and the fluid handling of interior spaces, provide an interesting contrast to the calm dignity of the Georgian, Federal, and neo-Georgian architecture that predominates in New Bern.

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Craven County Records, Craven County Courthouse, New Bern, North Carolina, Office of the Register of Deeds. (Subgroup: Deeds).
 Craven County Records, State Department of Archives and History, Raleigh, North Carolina. (Subgroup: Deeds).
 Grant, H. L. What New Bern N. C. Has to Offer You. Norfolk and Southern Railroad, 1905.
 Interview, Mr. W. C. Chadwick, May 20, 1971.
 Nelson, Eleanor Marshal. "Centenary Methodist Church," mimeographed sheet, 1964.
 New Bern Journal April 21, 1904; April 23, 1904; April 29, 1904; May 8, 1904.

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			O R	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds		Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds	
NW	° ' "	° ' "		35° 06' 47"	77° 02' 24"	
NE	° ' "	° ' "				
SE	° ' "	° ' "				
SW	° ' "	° ' "				

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: 1 1/2 Acres

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE:
Survey and Planning Unit Staff

ORGANIZATION: State Department of Archives and History DATE: 18 January 1972

STREET AND NUMBER:
109 East Jones Street

CITY OR TOWN: Raleigh STATE: North Carolina CODE: 37

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION

As the designated State Liaison 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. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National State Local

Name H. G. Jones

Title Director, State Department of Archives and History

Date 18 January 1972

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date _____

ATTEST:

Keeper of The National Register

Date _____

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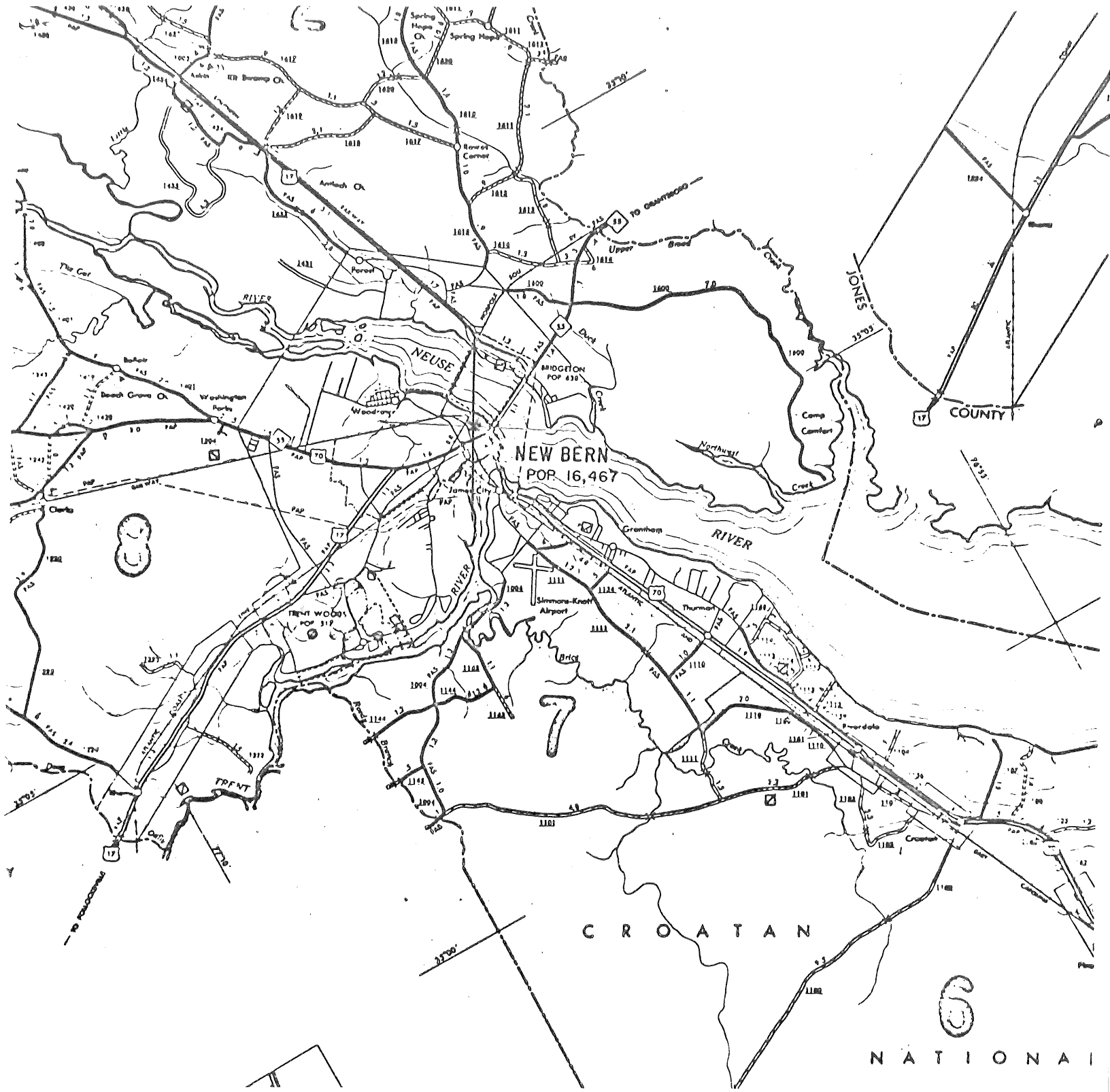
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9.

Vass, Reverend L. C. History of the Presbyterian Church in New Bern, N. C. with a Resume of Early Ecclesiastical Affairs in East North Carolina, and a Sketch of the Early Days of New Bern, N. C. Richmond: Whittet and Shepperson, 1886.



Centenary Methodist Church
 309 New Street
 New Bern, North Carolina

Map of Craven County, New Bern Chamber of Commerce
 Scale: 3/8" : 1 mile
 no date

Latitude
 degrees minutes seconds
 35° 06' 47"

Longitude
 degrees minutes seconds
 77° 02' 24"

