

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:
First Baptist Church

AND/OR HISTORIC:

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:
Northwest corner of Middle Street and Church Alley

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

STATE North Carolina	CODE 37	COUNTY: Craven	CODE 019
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3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Object <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Structure	<input type="checkbox"/> Public <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered	Yes: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input type="checkbox"/> No

PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural	<input type="checkbox"/> Government	<input type="checkbox"/> Park	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation	<input type="checkbox"/> Comments
<input type="checkbox"/> Commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> Industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify)	
<input type="checkbox"/> Educational	<input type="checkbox"/> Military	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Religious		
<input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Scientific		

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME:
First Baptist Church

STREET AND NUMBER:
411 Pollock Street 209 Middle St

CITY OR TOWN: New Bern	STATE: North Carolina	CODE 019
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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
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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 type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input checked="" 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

The First Baptist Church is a Gothic Revival structure constructed entirely of red brick laid in Flemish bond. The building consists of a rectangular main block, three bays wide and four bays deep, and a dominating square crenelated central entrance tower that rises in two stages. All the door and window openings are rather large with pointed-arched heads. The double doors of the main (east) entrance, containing multifoil arched panels, are set below a tympanum paneled with the same motif. Engaged Gothic shafts frame the doors and continue around the arch, beneath a sandstone hoodmold. Occurring above the entrance is a small rectangular window filled with stained glass. In the second stage of the tower a large arched vent featuring Y-tracery appears on each face of the tower. The hoodmold above the door is repeated above all vents except that on the rear which is outlined by a rubbed brick arch. Square buttresses set diagonally at each corner of the tower terminate as turrets, which, like the tower, are capped by wooden battlements. At the gable line, stepped stone weatherings appear on the offsets.

Flanking the entrance tower and completing the three-bay main facade are arched windows, filled with stained glass and surmounted by stone hoodmolds. The windows originally had wooden Y-tracery like the tower vents and were filled with diamond-paned glass. The sides of the church are divided into four bays, three of which are marked by arched windows containing stained glass and the eastern most bay by a blind one. They are outlined only by brick arches. Buttresses shorter than, but otherwise identical in design to, those of the tower appear at the ends of the main facade. The low water table of the brick foundation is indicated by sandstone facing only on the main facade. The rear wall of the church is obscured by a variety of twentieth century additions, but was constructed without openings.

The sanctuary of the church has been altered twice yet the vestibule for the most part remains as originally finished. The vestibule contains the projecting entrance bay and a hall which runs across the width of the church. Transverse plaster arches occur at the north and south ends of the hall, leading to the stairs that rise to the balcony. For the date of construction (1848) the design of the stairs is rather archaic. Rendered in a heavy Federal manner, the spiral stairs have newels, posts and balusters square in section and carry a rounded handrail. Because the stairs make a hairpin turn, the ramping of the balustrade is quite exaggerated. Flush vertical sheathing encloses closets beneath the stairs. Each of the closet doors has four arched panels and is hung below a sheathed pointed-arched tympanum. The double door that leads into the sanctuary is similarly paneled but lacks a tympanum. In the early twentieth century when the church was renovated and the pew arrangement altered to create a center aisle, a central entrance to the auditorium was cut in the vestibule wall.

Originally the sanctuary had a gallery across the rear wall and down the sides. It featured a balustrade paneled with multifoil arches and was supported on clustered columns. Between 1904 and 1907 the side galleries were eliminated and the clustered columns that supported the remaining balcony were replaced by four simple colonnettes. This change seems to be contemporary with the installation of the stained glass which now fills

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the windows.

The western wall of the church was constructed without openings; however, by 1898 a small baptistry had been built and the wall opened. A turn-of-the-century photograph of the sanctuary shows three doorways--a tall double door in the center flanked by shorter single doors. The doors, each leaf of which contained four lancet panels, were set below a sheathed tympanum. By 1908, after the addition of the annex to the baptistry end of the church, the doors were eliminated and replaced by three arches of equal width and height, which spanned the front wall of the sanctuary. During the 1904-1907 renovation the pew arrangement was changed and the doors removed from the original box pews.

The latest and most pervading renovation came in 1943. In that year a twelve-foot extension was made at the front of the sanctuary, new pews were installed, and the walls replastered, repaneled, and redecorated. A rose window containing stained glass was added above the balcony. Between the ceiling and the walls of the sanctuary, a plaster cornice twenty-two inches deep was installed. It forms capitals for the clustered paneled piers which flank the elevated recess allotted for the choir and organ. Two of the paneled doors which were removed from the church about 1904 were reinstated in the front wall. Florescent lights were hidden behind the cornice.

The church stands on a narrow lot which is cordoned off on two sides by a cast-iron fence with gate made by the Champion Iron Company, Kenton, Ohio. The fence is present in early twentieth century photographs and was probably erected during the last years of the nineteenth century. The square corner posts and gate are especially interesting, bearing floral and geometric patterns and topped by stepped pyramidal caps terminating the spherical finials.

8. SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

<input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Columbian	<input type="checkbox"/> 16th Century	<input type="checkbox"/> 18th Century	<input type="checkbox"/> 20th Century
<input type="checkbox"/> 15th Century	<input type="checkbox"/> 17th Century	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 19th Century	

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) 1848

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 checked="" 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

A significant number of Baptist were present in New Bern at least as early as 1740, when they sought recognition:

. . . a motion and petition read made by a sect of decenting people called Baptists that they may have the Liberty to build a house of worship and being duely examined by the Court acknowledged to all the Articles of the church of England except part of the 27th and 36th they Desireing to Preach among themselves - Referrd . . .

New Bern church historian, L. C. Vass, reported that the above, from a June 20, 1740, court document, has two words blotted out, which appear to be "but rejected." This marks the first known evidence of Baptists in New Bern, and they seem to have been active in the New Bern area from that point on, though the actual organization of a church did not take place until 1809. By 1812 the first Baptist Meeting House was completed, on Johnson Street, the present site of St. Cyprian's Episcopal Church.

The church remained at that site until the present lot on Middle Street was acquired in 1845. A plan for the new church structure was obtained from the architectural firm, Thomas & Son of New York, and construction was soon under way. Brick for the church was made by Colonel H. J. B. Clark in his kilns at Washington, North Carolina, and Hardy B. Lane accomplished the carpentry work. Colonel John D. Whitford noted in his history of the church that the structure is a modification of the Baptist church on Madison Avenue in New York (also designed by Thomas and Son) which he visited with the architects when in New York in 1847 to acquire a design for furniture for the New Bern church. One pew was made under the supervision of the architectural firm and shipped to New Bern to be copied.

Colonel Whitford described the interiors as designed and as executed:

When the plan of the new church was drawn, agreement was made for an arch in the tower, that an organ in the gallery would be in a niche. This arch it was feared by the home architect, would so weaken the tower there would be danger of its tumbling down, moreover the Baptist had no organ and it would be useless to venture any risk. Mr. Clark [Chairman of the Building Committee] preferred the judgement of the Messrs. Thomases and was overruled. Again in the original plan in the interior,

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arches were designed, springing from the ceiling very prettily, which is now smooth, if not gaudy, and looking as if resting on a small plaster moulding extending the length of the top of the side walls. This was added by the same architect.

In many ways the historical associations of the church are more impressive than its architecture. William Hooper, a grandson of the signer of the Declaration of Independence, and the founder of Wake Forest University, was a minister there. Samuel Wait, first president of Wake Forest was also a minister, as were Thomas Meredith and Richard Furman, who gave their names to Meredith College and Furman University, respectively. Martin R. Forey, another minister, founded Chowan College; and the Biblical Recorder, begun by the New Bern church on January 5, 1835, is still published as the state organ of the North Carolina Baptist Convention.

The sanctuary of the church was long used for various public occasions, one of which was Edward Everett's oration on George Washington, delivered on April 12, 1859. Mr. Everett, touring to raise money for the restoration of Mount Vernon, travelled to New Bern by special train, and spoke before a packed house of more than 600 people.

During the Civil War, immediately after the occupation of the town by Union soldiers in March, 1862, all churches were ordered opened, and the Baptist Church was served by several chaplains. Throughout that era the bell in the church tower was the officially designated bell used to signal guard relief.

On November 8, 1948, six days after his upset victory of Thomas Dewey in that year's presidential election, President Harry Truman flew to New Bern to worship in the First Baptist Church. He was responding to an invitation delivered by the local minister some two months earlier. The president told newsmen that he had come to New Bern "as a Baptist worshipper to return his thanks to God." Some 20,000 people are said to have lined the street to glimpse the president and other members of his party. These included Governor Gregg Cherry and Governor Kerr Scott (outgoing and incoming governors of North Carolina), Clark M. Clifford, Matthew J. Connelly, Stanley Woodard and Jonathan Daniels.

The involvement of the First Baptist church with so many men who later gained educational prominence, with the founding of a religious publication as important as Biblical Recorder, and with other important historical persons and events, is unusual for a small town. The First Baptist Church is an interesting example of a Gothic Revival ecclesiastical structure; George Nowitzky's description of it in 1888 is still applicable:

It is in the English mediaeval style, with heavy tower and battlements, and its substantial walls with ivy clinging to them do much towards beautifying Middle Street.

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Carraway, Gertrude. Crown of Life. New Bern: Owen G. Dunn, 1940.

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).

"First Baptist Church, Sesquicentennial Celebration, May 10-15, 1959." Sesquicentennial program published by the church.

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY				OR	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		
NW	°	'	"	°	'	"	35°	06'	11"	77°	02'	45"
NE	°	'	"	°	'	"						
SE	°	'	"	°	'	"						
SW	°	'	"	°	'	"						

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY:

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

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE:

Survey and Planning Unit Staff, John B. Wells, III, Supervisor

ORGANIZATION

State Department of Archives and History

DATE

30 November 1971

STREET AND NUMBER:

109 East Jones Street

CITY OR TOWN:

Raleigh

STATE

North Carolina

CODE

37

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

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

30 November 1971

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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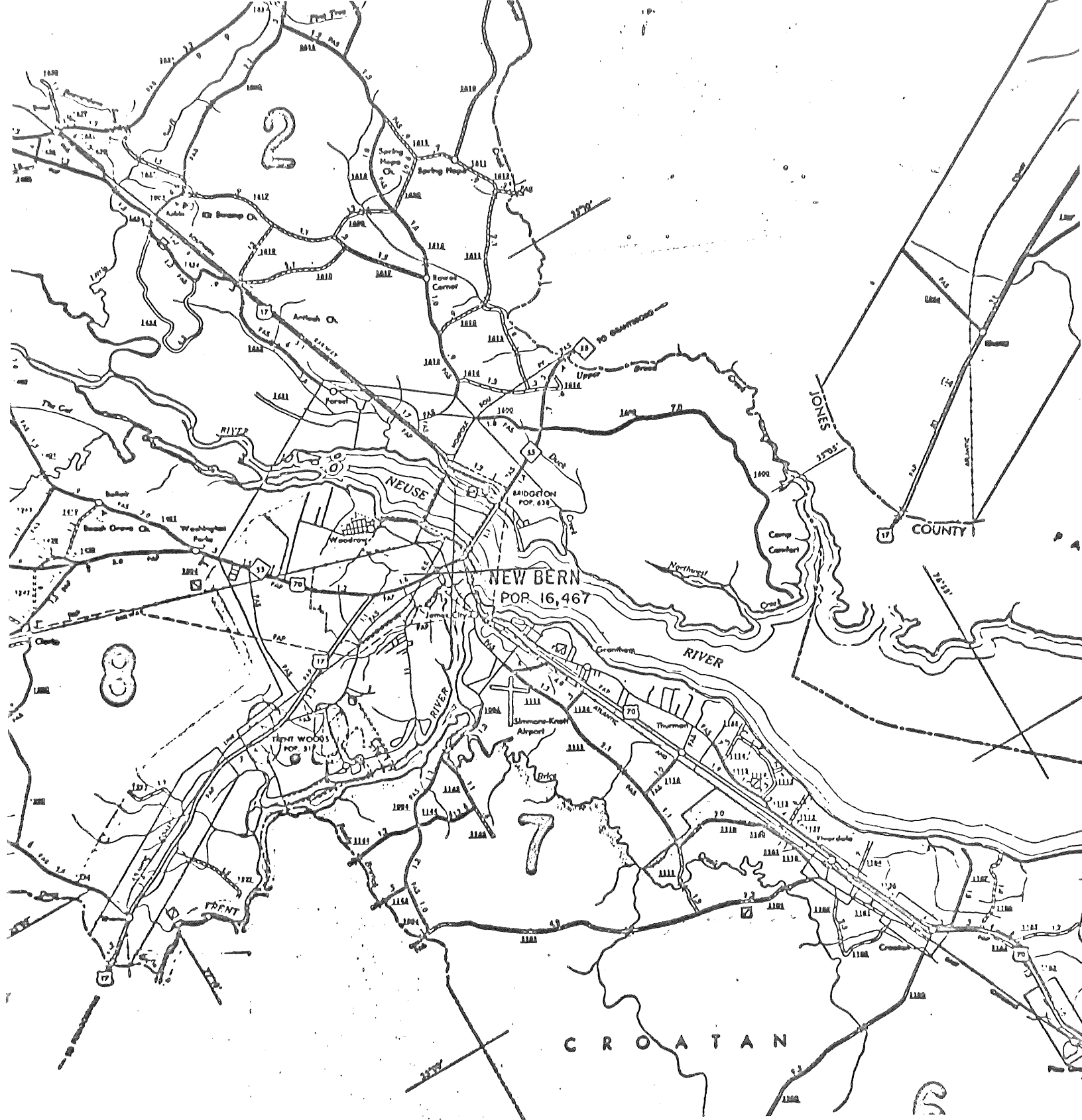
(Number all entries)

9.

Nowitzky, George I. Norfolk: The Marine Metropolis of Virginia and Sound and River Cities of North Carolina. Norfolk and Raleigh: George I. Nowitzky, 1888.

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.

Whitford, Colonel John D. "The Home of the Walking Stick, Early History of the Biblical Recorder and Baptist Church in New Bern," before 1900. Unpublished manuscript in possession of Mrs. G. Tull Richardson, Bellair New Bern, North Carolina.

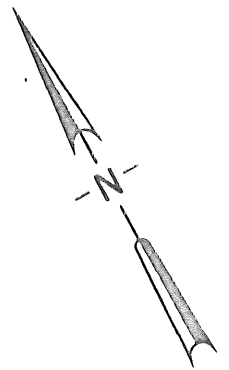
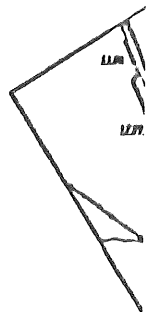


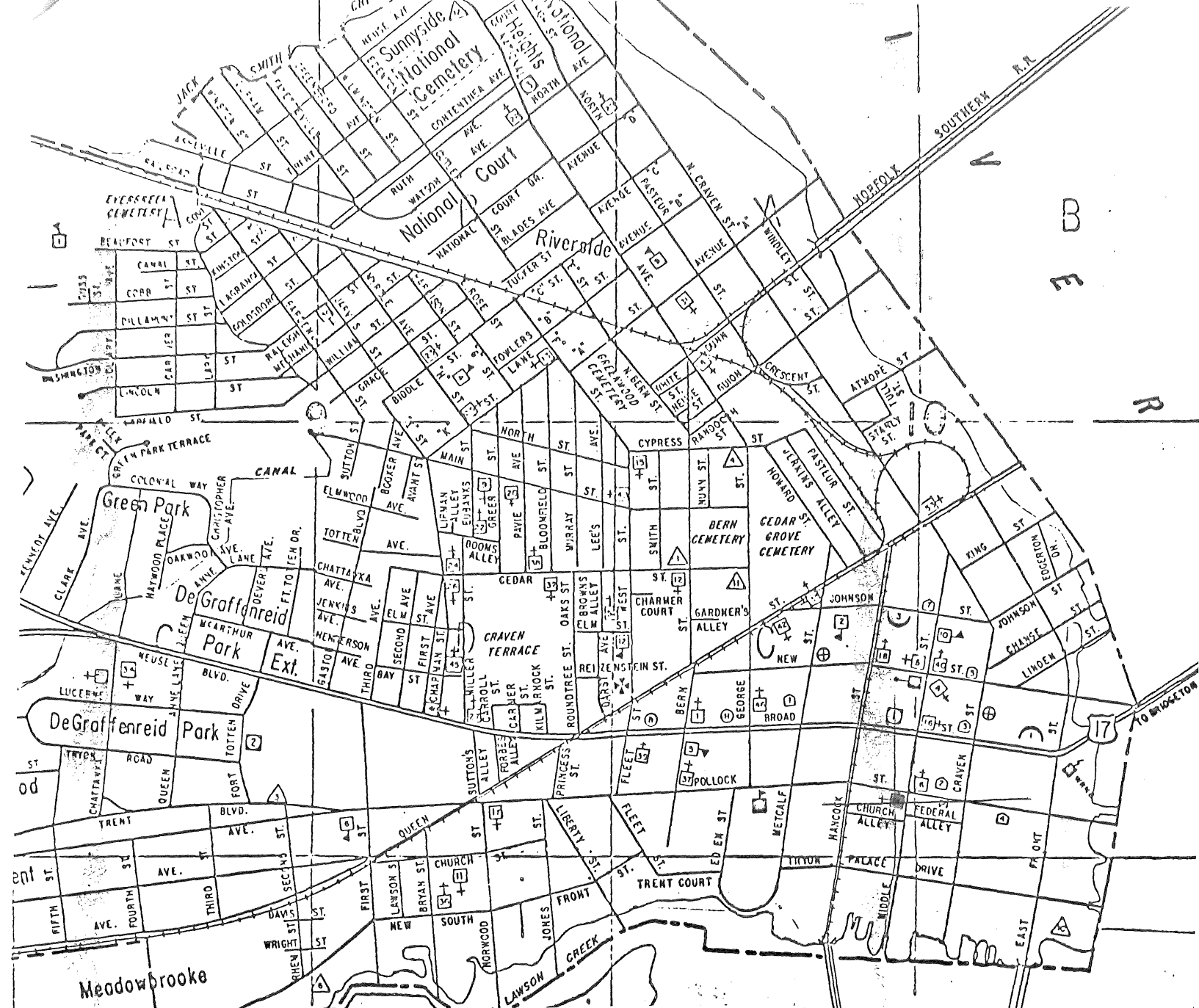
First Baptist Church
 Northwest corner of Middle Street and Church Alley
 New Bern, North Carolina

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

Latitude
 degrees minutes seconds
 35° 06' 11"

Longitude
 degrees minutes seconds
 77° 02' 45"





First Baptist Church
 Northwest corner of Middle Street and Church Alley
 New Bern, North Carolina

Map of New Bern and Vicinity, New Bern
 Chamber of Commerce, drawn by: Gilfredo Gonzalez
 Scale: 1"/1200 feet
 no date

