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United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NOV 28 1989

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

### 1. Name of Property

historic name Penns Neck Baptist Church; 2) Red Lion Tavern  
other names/site number Princeton Baptist Church at Penns Neck; 2) church parsonage

### 2. Location

street & number U.S. Highway #1 at Princeton-Hightstown Road  not for publication  
city, town Penns Neck, West Windsor Township  vicinity  
state New Jersey code 034 county Mercer code 021 zip code 08550

### 3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u>2</u>	<u>1</u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	<u>1</u>	_____ sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	_____	_____ structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	_____	_____ objects
		<u>3</u>	<u>1</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing:  
N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

### 4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.  See continuation sheet.

[Signature] 11/14/89  
Signature of certifying official Date  
Assistant Commissioner for Natural and Historic Resources/DSHPO  
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.  See continuation sheet.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting or other official Date  
\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

### 5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register.  See continuation sheet.

determined eligible for the National Register.  See continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the National Register.

removed from the National Register.

other, (explain): \_\_\_\_\_

[Signature] 12/29/89  
Date of Action  
Signature of the Keeper

## 6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Religion/ religious structure

Funerary/ cemetery

Domestic/ Hotel

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Religion/ religious structure

still in use as cemetery

Church parsonage and rental unit

## 7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

1) Colonial--other: Meeting House form with later elements of Greek Revival

2) Federal--other: Georgian form with vernacular use of stylistic elements of period

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation 1) stone; 2) cinderblock  
walls frame

roof shingle

other 1) wood; 2) asbestos shingles

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Baptist Church complex at Penns Neck is located on the northeasterly corner property of the Princeton traffic circle at the intersection of U.S. Route #1 and the Princeton-Hightstown Road (Washington Road), in Mercer County, N.J. The property, consisting of 2-plus acres, is the chief surviving manifestation of an old hamlet known as Penns Neck in West Windsor Township. The complex contains the original meeting house (1812), rehabilitated in 1877, and its churchyard (1812); tavern house (1807), purchased in 1879 for occupancy as parsonage; and Christian Education Building (1963). The last building is considered non-contributing because of its date of construction. The burial yard is counted as a site. The first burial took place in 1815 for a child. Its family names serve as a record of the many generations of inhabitants of Penns Neck from the time of settlement in the latter part of the 18th century down to the present.

The church was turned on its lot in 1877 to face Route #1, originally a turnpike. With highway widening taking place over the years, it now has a setback of less than 25 feet. A grass lawn lies to each side, with some mature trees. To its south, fronting on the northeast segment of the traffic circle is a real estate office (a rental building belonging to the church), which is excluded from this nomination. Behind it, easterly, separated by a thick hedgerow, is the tavern/parsonage, which faces to the Princeton-Hightstown Road. It has a deep setback, allowing for a large front lawn. To eastward of it a side lawn continues to the main entrance drive to the church complex. Stone pillars mark its opening. The newest section of the cemetery lies on the far side of the drive. The cemetery is L-shaped, making a 90-degree turn westward at a point on alignment more or less with the southwest wall of the meeting house. The Christian Education Building is contained within the ell. It is at a right angle to the rear of the parsonage and fronts also upon the side road. The drive runs parallel with its rear elevation, leading to a parking area by the church. The parsonage building formerly occupied the corner property, fronting on Route #1. It was relocated to its present site in 1929 because of highway widening.

\* The highway, Route #1, runs in a southwesterly direction. The church property's front and rear lines are parallel with it. The remaining lines run southeasterly.

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The Princeton Baptist Church at Penns Neck (full title) is a frame building of basic meeting house form of two-story height, erected in 1812 as an auditorium (called sanctuary) with pulpit area at one end. Gable-fronted, it was originally towerless. The dimensions of this auditorium are 45½' by 36'. Wide plain board pilasters, with fillet molding near the top, mark its corners. The side elevations contain three pairs of equi-distantly spaced double-hung sash windows of two-story height. Each sash is two panes wide and 5 deep, filled with clear glass. A mullion separates each pair, and a single frame encompasses both, with flat projecting cornice, extended beyond window width.

In 1877, after a period of disuse and lack of maintenance while the congregation worshipped in a second edifice in Princeton, a decision was made to resume services on a regular basis at the Penns Neck site. In the interim period a small community had developed along the turnpike road. As other church congregations had done in Lawrenceville and Princeton, the trustees decided to turn their meeting house from its south orientation to face the road. A leaking roof had caused serious damage to the walls, and the building was given a major overhaul with new siding and new plaster walls. It is believed that the present windows were introduced at this time, probably replacing smaller windows of 12/12 sash. A decision followed shortly to add a vestibule with meeting room above for Sunday classes and prayer meetings and to mount a belfry and steeple. Completed in 1878, the additional bay added another 12 feet at entry gable. The side walls were left blank (although there is now a small sash window for a lavatory), but the corners were marked with matching pilasters. The new gable front (1878) is three bays wide, with a recessed center entrance set off by a large-scaled Greek Revival arch enframing composed of paired plain pilasters carrying a denticulated frieze. A pair of tall recessed-panel doors fills the opening, one containing a period escutcheon. The door reveals are also paneled. To each side is a paired window matching those on side elevations. Set in the wall above the arch in a projecting molded frame is a rectangular stone block inscribed: Baptist Church A.D. 1812. Rebuilt A.D. 1877. In the gable peak is a pointed-arch window containing two pointed-arch panes and one of diamond shape, under a pointed-arch molded cornice.

A plain architrave runs above the pilasters. Boxed eaves terminate with short returns on gable facades. The square belfry tower is two-staged. The first is blank-walled, with paired plain pilasters capped with modillions supporting a projecting cornice; the second is similar with rectangular louvered openings and carries a projecting pyramidal roof with modillioned cornice. A metal finial, rescued from a lost steeple, now adorns roof peak.

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A history of the church (1904) suggests that the front gable end of the auditorium was also enlarged at this time. It doubtless refers to the piercing of the wall to add a niche for seating of minister and visiting clergy. This niche is enframed with a Greek Revival-styled arch which matches the one on front gable. Centered on the wall at a height of about 3 feet from the floor, it is fronted by a raised platform reserved for the preacher. (The platform height was raised in 1909.) This is the extent of the rehabilitation and additions to the 1812 sanctuary (excluding the office building).

Attached at rear is a two-story addition for church office and pastor's study built this century. In 1902, plans were first made for this addition and still under discussion in 1904. Although executed at a later date, there is but small variant in the original plan as recorded in the Minutes. The frame addition is 31' by 15½', 3 bays by 1, centered on the gable wall. Its own gable roof is on alignment with that of the church's, and it features a lunette in gable peak. Windows have 6/6 sash. A narrow square brick chimney stack is centered on the south roof slope next to the church wall. The exterior entrance is located on the south elevation at its west corner.

Both church and addition are clapboard-sheathed and roofed with asphalt shingles. The foundation is of stone, cement-coated, and for the most part not visible. There is a full cellar under the addition; crawl space only under the church.

Interior

The auditorium is unchanged from its original dimensions and still conveys a sense of its first plan in its simplicity. There is no architectural separation of congregants from clergy. Three-quarters of the floor area are filled by three sections of pews, separated by two aisles. At gable end, a 3' high platform, 13½' wide, and 6' deep, projects from the center of the wall. This is reserved for the pastor for conducting services. It is reached by a set of steps parallel with the wall at right side. Adjoining it is another platform a foot lower, which extends to the left wall and projects more deeply into the room. This area is for choir and organist. A door behind it leads into the office addition.

The walls are wainscotted up to window sills with wide vertical bead-edged boards, and plastered above the chair rail. A molded cornice encircles the ceiling. The windows contain their original movable louvered blinds with separate pairs for each sash. The entire floor is carpeted, a practice that dates back to at least the 1880s when "re-carpeting" was undertaken. The rows of pews

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diminish in number from south section (at right) to north, with 12 at right, 11 at center, and 9 at left. The longer center pews are divided at center. The front pews are enclosed with a recessed-panel wall. The white-painted straight-backed wooden pews, dating no earlier than 1877, have ogee-curved solid end panels, scroll-tipped. The side-wall panel is outlined by molding.

Above the last 5 pews a gallery projects 15' into the auditorium, but its function is not to provide additional seating for services but rather to provide a good-sized room for Sunday classes and meetings by enlarging upon the space above the vestibule addition. Its date of construction is uncertain, as the Minutes seem to suggest that the original upper room would have the same dimensions as the vestibule. Furthermore, it interferes with the operation of the last pair of window sash, and a flush board has been placed against a short segment as part of room wall. (This is not noticeable from the exterior.) Nonetheless, the pastor at the time described it as a gallery.

A railing of classical urn-shaped balusters encloses the gallery, supported by two round columns on octagonal bases installed in aisle seats of the center section in the 6th pew from back wall. Above the balustrade is a windowed wall of 7 double-hung sash. The internal three contain 9/9 panes, the remainder 12/12. The rail and skirting of the balustrade have compound moldings. On alignment with the balcony projection, former chimneys (stovepipe holes detectable) extend into the room. The church is now heated by radiators.

The vestibule addition of 1878 is 11' deep within. It connects with the auditorium through tall doorways to the aisles. On the left (north) a wall encloses a straight run of stairs parallel with the side elevation, with an understairs closet. On the opposite wall, there is a lavatory and another closet. The original doors are 8' high, with four recessed panels outlined by moldings in Greek Revival mode. The room above flows forward to the gallery wall and appears to have been one vast open space with access to belfry and bell rope, now partly subdivided by an approximately 8' high partitioning of one corner creating a kitchen. The upper walls, like those below, have wainscot of vertical bead-edged boards. Victorian-type bead board backs the gallery balustrade. Two square beveled posts are centered in the room. The flooring is new.

The final improvement was made in 1885/6 with the construction of an indoor "baptistry" below the pulpit platform to eliminate winter baptisms in the cold Millstone River. This consists of a large water container of brick and cement with lined interior large enough for immersion of the individual receiving the rite by the administering clergyman. The platform floor is hinged so that it

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can be lifted up. The niche behind it, of approximate 4' depth with curved side walls, accommodated with one full pew and two short side-turned pews, probably serves another purpose on these occasions.

The records indicate that lighting was obtained from oil lamps in 1843 and from gas in 1909. The current electric lighting is supplied by suspended ornamental metal chandeliers of circular form, with rim supporting 10 oval panes of clear glass. Large square, four-sectioned screens have been inserted in the front gable wall as speakers, one high above the choir platform, the other above the exiting door to the office addition at right of pulpit platform.

The office addition, although intended to be divided into two, is now thrown open to make one large room on each floor. The church niche projects into the ground story room, and at the north corner are a flight of steps and landing for entering the choir area. Enclosed stairs to floor above and cellar below run parallel with the south wall.

The Tavern/Parsonage

This is a large 2-story frame building, almost square, measuring 40' by 36', which makes a commanding presence on its lot. Based on an application for a license renewal in 1808, it appears to have been built the year before for use as a tavern on the newly chartered Trenton and New Brunswick Turnpike which would pass by its door. It follows a classical plan of 5-bay facade with centered stair hall and double file of rooms. It is four bays deep, which contributes to its sense of great size. Large-scale brick chimney stacks with drip caps are centered at gable peaks. These combine the flues for 8 corner fireplaces. At the east end of the rear wall is a kitchen ell of one story. Rooms of ground story are 8'9" high.

The tavern, first known as the Red Lion and afterward as the White Horse, remained in operation until the 1870s. It was purchased in 1879 by the Baptist congregation for use as parsonage and social hall. In 1929, it was moved from its original location to its present site. Its new foundation is of cinderblock.

It is assumed that its original sheathing was of clapboards because of periodic references in the church records to repainting. By 1929, when a photograph was taken, the outer covering was of wood shingles, slightly flaired at midpoint between stories. Its current skin is of asbestos shingles, which retain the forward kick but conceal a probably existing fascia board. Both block and

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wing are similarly sheathed and both have asphalt-shingled gable roofs, with extended boxed eaves and molded returns.

By the time of the 1929 photograph, a front porch and wing porch had been added in Shingle Style. The former spans the internal three bays to the very edge of the frames of the end windows. Solid balustrade and posts are shingled with openings spanned by Tudor arches. The wing's porch encloses only the entry bay of its two bays, with stairs at end parallel with the wall. Roofs are slightly hipped. This ell has an additional porch on its opposite wall, which is shed-roofed, with square posts and stick railing.

The west half of the house retains its 9/6 sash on the ground story, except for its two front windows, and its 6/6 sash on the upper story. The parsonage windows have all been changed to 2/2 sash. A side entry to the tap room--front room on east side--was removed and replaced with the existing bay window shortly after the church purchased the building. The window frames, molded on outer edge, contain pintles for louvered shutters, since removed. Each gable apex contains a pair of 4/2 sash which flank the chimney. The principal entry still retains its original door of 6 raised panels with triple beaded edging. The relatively plain frame has an outer bead. Above is a 5-pane transom.

Sometime after 1929, the kitchen ell was enlarged by removal of its cooking fireplace and the addition of another 3+ feet. A new square brick chimney was constructed against its gable wall. The addition included a small window on either wall.

In 1925, the church converted the building into two duplex apartments. This was accomplished with minimal change as the center hall plan lent itself to easy division for stairs and additional area for the creation of an extra bath and kitchen.

Cellar

The foundation walls and triangular chimney bases are constructed of cinderblock because of the house relocation, but the framing support system survives and reveals an interesting fact about the original floor plan. The stair hall area is off-center by a few feet, allowing approximately 17' on the east of it under the rooms which served as bar and dining room, next to kitchen ell, and 14' on the opposite side. The hall area is demarcated by three larger beams running front-to-back direction with an extra smaller joist running partway between the first and second from the east as far as a summer beam which spans

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transversely from wall to wall to the apices of the chimney bases. A series of small joists ties these beams together crosswise. This arrangement terminates about 40" from the rear wall and about 7½' from the front wall. This may be explained by the fact that the staircase above (now made two side by side) originates 7½' back from the entry and does not run to the rear wall. Interpretation as to which side of this approximately 8' wide under-hall area carried the original stairway is complicated by the fact that old floorboards have been replaced with narrow flooring at the front (under the entrance vestibule) and in part at back by the addition of a second kitchen filling the end of the passage behind the stair flight. The installation of a flight of cellar stairs under the second (west) stairway further blurs the original arrangement. The remainder of the original floorboards seen here and under the rooms average 7-9" in size.

A concrete block wall has been added about 6" east of the hall framing and runs front to back to create two cellar compartments. A bulkhead entrance is located near the west corner of the rear wall.

The space under the east side of the house flows into the space under the kitchen ell. House sill and wing sill, side by side, are visible, though the latter is at lower height. The wing's opposite sill is also visible, unsupported by a wall below, as this unit has been extended by 6½'. Its beams run sidewise, rather than lengthwise. A chimney for the cooking fireplace at gable end has been removed, its area still detectable by patches of flooring, and its foundation wall is gone. New flooring above represents the extension of the wing by about 3½'. Stairs to the kitchen run alongside the new foundation wall. Despite the lower level of the wing as built, this condition no longer prevails, as the kitchen floor has been raised to the level of the adjoining main block.

Ground Story

The floor plan as indicated in the cellar prevails. Although the front entrance is almost centered, it favors the west side of the facade by 3" which was perhaps intentional. The vestibule within is entirely off-center, allowing only 10" to wall on east of doorway, with 33" on opposite side. What appears to have been a 7½' square vestibule is now divided crosswise by a ceiling-high wall in which modern glass and panel doors leading to the separate apartments are found. The area above is made decorative with three horizontal panels, trimmed with molding. Behind each door is a smaller vestibule (40" deep) with in-wall carpeted stairs beyond and doorway to side to front room.



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The stairways, separated by an internal wall, are identical. Each ends with winders and a simple square newel post with square cap. The flights occupy a little more than half of the depth of the building. The area behind them--full hall width--has been made into a kitchen for the west apartment, excepting a small squared area which serves as a storage closet in the rear (dining) room of the east apartment. The rear door (new) from the hall, almost on alignment with the front entry, serves the kitchen. A 6/6 sash window has been installed next to it for better illumination of the space.

The hall is flanked by a double file of rooms each side, those on the east side having a width of about 16½' and those on the west of about 15' at best. Rooms are of almost equal depth, and each has a cater-cornered fireplace. An archway with molded frame separates the west two rooms. The kitchen is entered from a door in the rear room. Both fireplaces wear their original Federal-style mantelpieces with reeded pilasters. One original raised 6-panel door (panels are beaded) survives as entry door to this apartment. The corresponding rooms of the east apartment recall their original use as public rooms not only by larger size but by the bay window, reminder of the side tavern entrance that was removed, and by the replacement of a Federal mantel with one of Early Victorian style in the tap room. By contrast, the surviving mantelpiece in the dining room matches those found in the other rooms. This room has a built-in corner cupboard, also in Federal style, of two sections with butterfly shelves above. The upper doors have lost their panels to glass panes, but the remaining recessed-panel doors are intact as well as the heavily molded cornice. Simple chair rails also survive. Flooring is new.

The kitchen has been modernized. Its two exterior doors, opposite each other, are replacements, one in Dutch two-sectioned style. The space gained by lengthening the ell has been used for lavatory, storage closet and basement stairway.

Second Story

This story does not entirely replicate the first. Part, at least, of the spatial distribution is original, with a favoring of the east side of the house. There are three rooms here, one above the front room and two at back. The rear bedroom is less wide, having sacrificed some space for an adjacent room. This extra room has gained additional floor area by being given one half of the space above the 7½' center hall. The remaining half contains an in-wall flight of stairs to the attic. A rear window in this room is centered above the rear door. There is a small vestibule at the foot of the attic stairs, which can be entered

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from this bedroom and also from one on the west side of the building. Both contain raised-panel doors matching those earlier encountered. Suffolk latches of late style are found on both doors. The west door also has a small round wood pull.

The front bedroom on the west side is less wide than the rear room because a hallway running parallel with the in-wall stairs has claimed some of its area. This hall passage leads forward to an entrance on the left for a small room mainly occupying the space above the entry vestibule. The window centered on the facade above the entry is at midpoint on the wall, which indicates that this room has taken space from the east bedroom, as it does not correspond with the vestibule's east wall. It is now used as a bathroom, but its raised-panel door from the hall contains the room number "3." A chair rail remains in place. The walls contain vertical boarding and plaster. Of small size, 9'4" x 9'8", especially when compared with the other rooms, it is not known whether it dates to tavern days or not.

All four main rooms on this floor have corner fireplaces. Three of the mantelpieces are similar to those on the ground story. The fourth, in the rear east room, is late Georgian in style, with molded surround but no frieze. There are built-in corner closets in both east rooms, but these were probably added at a later date. One for clothes shows a chair-rail encircling its walls. Walls are of plaster, although some have been wall-papered. The attic of the wing, reached by 3 steps downward, serves as bathroom.

Attic

Open to the rafters, this space had apparently been used for accommodations, perhaps unpartitioned, as no evidence of room divisions was seen. The end slopes of the roof are partitioned off, however, at a distance of about 8' from the rafter feet by boarding laid horizontally (attached by square-headed cut nails to slender square posts) for a height of about 5½'. The partitioning of the front slope was mounted in three segments, the center section being of narrower boards. The most easterly segment, running to gable wall, is white-washed and contains a narrow wood strip nailed horizontally at about eye level. There are several nail holes in it, perhaps an indication that clothing pegs were once attached.

The attic is reached by a flight of original stairs, 44" wide, between the walls of the bedrooms. A hole in one wall reveals split lath. The stairs terminate about 4½' short of roof ridge. The stairs are off-center, allowing more than 20' to east side, and about 15' to the other to gable walls. This

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conforms with the unequal division of space found on the floors below and in the cellar. Floorboards, up to 16½", are laid in three sections. An earlier roof of wood shingles is visible. Roof has wind braces. The rafters are sawn but pegged. Sawn boards serve as ties at a relatively low level. A feature rarely seen (although known) is a ladder leading to a roof hatch. Its purpose was to mount the roof to put out chimney fires and flying sparks. It is constructed of thick boards, with treads held by wedge-shaped supports.

The large gable-end chimneys are of old bricks seated on mud layers. Partly plastered, they are centered on the wall, flanked by small windows. The walls are plastered.

Churchyard

William and Mary Kovenhoven's gift of an acre of land to the Baptists specified in the deed that it was for the purpose of burial yard as well as for meeting house. The first grave was dug three years later, in 1815, for a Kovenhoven child.

The earliest burials took place closest to the meeting house, which at that time and up to 1877 stood sidewise on its lot. The Minutes indicate that the property was fenced in at an early date. The oldest tombstones are found in a number of uneven rows, facing south, beginning near the north property line. When the office addition was made to the church at back, it encroached upon at least one grave.

Tombstones for later burials in the 19th century are seen in an easterly continuation of the first rows, with additional rows as well. The cemetery then makes an ell turn to south and follows the easterly property line to its boundary on the Princeton-Hightstown Road. This most recent section is still in use.

The oldest tombstones are of typical form for early 19th century, with rounded or scalloped heads. Those of later date are flat-headed. A number have weathered badly, chipped, or sunk partly into the ground. Later generations of the Kovenhovens and Schencks, the original purchasers of the Penns Neck tract in 1737, are buried here. Other names are recognizable as early settlers of West Windsor Township. (The Kovenhoven name, spelled with a "C" in other locales, later became Conover.)

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The oldest section of the burial ground shows the character of age, with trees interspersed among the stones, creating patterns of light and shadow. The newest sweeps westward toward it as a grassy swath bathed in sunlight.

Christian Education Building

Education had been a prime concern of this Baptist congregation from the time of its formal organization, and it promised a minister it called in 1815 a school of 25 scholars, for which he would receive two dollars per child. In 1819, it reported that it had a school of 46 pupils, with seven instructors and a superintendent. At one period of its history it had schools at Princeton, Penns Neck, and Little Rocky Hill.

With the addition of the vestibule to the church building in the 1870s, it obtained a room for holding Sunday classes, and with the purchase of the tavern for parsonage it gained a place to conduct meetings and have social functions. This century the office addition to the church supplied an office and pastoral study. In 1963, the final need was met -- the construction of a building for Christian education and meetings.

This is a large two-story rectangular building of glass and masonry. It is 5 bays wide, with curtain walls between brick posts. The entrance is in the east bay. A band of large concrete blocks marks separation of floors. Windows are triple-sectioned, with end windows having transom above and awning window below a fixed pane. Gable walls of concrete block are windowless.

**8. Statement of Significance**

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally     statewide     locally

Applicable National Register Criteria     A     B     C     D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions)     A     B     C     D     E     F     G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Architecture  
Exploration/Settlement  
Religion

Period of Significance

1807-1930  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Significant Dates

1812; 1878  
1807; 1879  
\_\_\_\_\_

Cultural Affiliation

N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Significant Person

William Kovenhoven

Architect/Builder

Elias Bailey  
\_\_\_\_\_

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

The Princeton Baptist Church at Penns Neck and its parsonage -- the original Red Lion Tavern -- are significant as the major surviving record of the existence of an early turnpike community, now almost vanished. They also represent the first buildings that were erected, which brought the community into being. Their construction was largely due to the actions of William Kovenhoven, hereditary owner of one half of the 6500-acre Penns Neck Tract, bought by John Kovenhoven and Garret Schenck from the sons of William Penn, after whom it took its name. Following the chartering (1804) of the Straight Turnpike from Trenton to New Brunswick through his property, Kovenhoven built, c. 1807, a tavern fronting upon it at an intersection of a road, partly relaid, partly new (course approved in court session 1806), leading southeastward from nearby Princeton to Hightstown (now Princeton-Hightstown Road). Erected for this purpose, its plan is still intact (although serving as parsonage since 1879), and it is a good example of tavern architecture in the period of the Early Republic. In 1812, Kovenhoven deeded over an acre of land next to the tavern to a small flock of Baptists to have a house of worship and burial yard. The small frame meeting house they built, harking back to familiar models of the preceding century for Fundamental-ist simplicity, remains today essentially the same, except for the addition of a vestibule and steeple, and introduction of a few elements of Greek Revival styling (1878). Both tavern and church meet Criterion C of the standards for the National Register, as illustrative of a type of architecture employed for their particular functions in a new-founded community at the beginning of the 19th century. The cemetery qualifies as a contributing site because of its close relationship to the locally important Kovenhoven family, whose family members are buried there, including William, his wife, and children, and other families who settled Penns Neck and made up its population through the 19th century. The cemetery also contains the graves of soldiers who fought in the Revolutionary War, the War of 1812, and the Civil War. William Kovenhoven (1767-1838) was the son of William "Kouwenhoven," of "Penns Neck," who willed in 1777 his mansion house and plantation to his widow until his son William reached 21 years. William Kovenhoven's land is mentioned in the relaid segment of the old easterly road to Allentown.

See continuation sheet

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

See continuation sheet

Previous documentation on file (NPS): N/A

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

- Primary location of additional data:
- State historic preservation office
  - Other State agency
  - Federal agency
  - Local government
  - University
  - Other
- Specify repository: \_\_\_\_\_

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreeage of property Princeton, NJ Quad 2 acres

UTM References

A 

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5	3	0	8	0	0
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4	4	6	4	4	4	0
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 Zone Easting Northing

C 

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B 

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 Zone Easting Northing

D 

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See continuation sheet

**Verbal Boundary Description**

The boundaries conform with Block S-40, Lots 3 and 4 on the current tax map of West Windsor Township, with the exception of the southwest corner which fronts on the traffic circle on which is located a modern building. A line of convenience has been drawn from Route 1, beginning at the north edge of the paved driveway to this building, extending east to a point behind the building to exclude it, thence running south to Princeton-Hightstown Road (Washington Road).

See continuation sheet

**Boundary Justification**

The property nominated has consisted of this combined tract of land since 1879. It is made up of the acre of land given for meeting house and parsonage in 1812 and the tavern lot of (originally) two acres, but minus the southwest corner with modern building. This fraction of an acre has been excluded because the building is modern and has no association with the history of the nominated sites.

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**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Ursula C. Brecknell, Consultant (major historical research by Frank Updike)  
 organization Historic House Surveys date October 30, 1988  
 street & number 36 Ellis Drive telephone (201) 359-3498  
 city or town Belle Mead, state New Jersey zip code 08502

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The first half of the 18th century saw much of New Jersey still in the hands of absentee landholders. The area known as Penns Neck was such a tract of land. Originally patented to William Penn in 1692 as an East New Jersey Proprietor, he held it until his death. His sons sold it in 1737 to two Dutchmen, lifetime residents of Middletown, Monmouth County, where settlement had taken place the preceding century. The tract extended as a neck of land between the Millstone River and the Stony Brook, and reached southeastward to Bear Brook and the Assunpink. It totaled 6500 acres and made up a good portion of today's West Windsor Township. These men, John Kovenhoven and Garret Schenck, divided the land into equal parts with the intention of providing property for their children. Kovenhoven's son took up his share, settled, and sold off farm tracts to others, as did Schenck's son. The area remained sparsely settled, however, with no community core, until after 1800. The chartering in 1804 of a "straight turnpike" to run from Trenton to New Brunswick, crossing through Penns Neck within the vicinity of Princeton, became the impetus for growth. An old road had led from Allentown to the vicinity of Princeton, and this was improved upon shortly after the turnpike laying, the road commissioners in 1806 calling for its relaying in part "nearly as the old road now runs...to the Turnpike Road...to the Main Street in Princeton." It passed for a considerable distance on the line between William Kovenhoven, grandson of John, and Garret Schenck. It was from this direction that settlers had come following the Kovenhovens and Schencks in the latter half of the century.

The Princeton Baptist Church at Penns Neck

The church, through its early date of organization and construction of its meeting house, stands as a record of the rooting of this denomination in New Jersey. From the first congregation in Middletown, formed 1668, worshippers took the church with them as they left the home community to settle new lands, but maintained family and religious ties. Jonathan Stout and his family introduced the church into Hopewell Township in 1716, a few years after he pioneered into West New Jersey Province. The Olde Yellow Meeting House (National Register, 1975) of Upper Freehold, Monmouth County, was built c. 1750 on a lot of land bought decades earlier for the purpose by men of Middletown who opened up new lands in the far southwestern corner of the county near Allentown. Following a westward path of migration, the church was introduced into the new mill center of Hightstown, established by John Hight, a Baptist. This was followed by the pastors of this congregation responding to calls from other Baptists settling within the region. According to the 1786 Minutes of the Hightstown congregation, they were serving as a mother church to about a half dozen congregations meeting

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in private homes. In 1787, there was added to this list a small flock of Baptists centered about Penns Neck. Preaching commenced that year at the home of John Flock, then a resident of Lawrence Township, who joined the Hightstown Church, and at John Campbell's in Princeton. Another John Hight, perhaps a son, residing at Penns Neck, made his home available, too, and in 1790 he and his wife were baptized into the Hightstown Church. As new members were thereafter added, their names were entered in a separate record book for the Penns Neck area under its then name of Williamsborough (thought to have been chosen to honor William Penn). The Rev. Peter Wilson came from Hightstown to minister to them. Among the names found in this record is Joseph Stout's. It is conjectured that he had probably come from the Hopewell congregation (where such name is common) to help the group organize toward independence.

This early history was personally recorded by the Rev. Peter Wilson as a preface to the account of organization of the church as a separate entity in 1812, with a congregation of 37. William Kovenhoven, a Baptist himself, and the major landholder of the area, was moved to provide a lot for a meeting house and burial ground that year, as there were no places of worship nearby for them to observe their ceremony. He himself was a founding member. Wilson indicated in his history that Kovenhoven was a member of the Hightstown congregation, one of several named, who had generously contributed toward the raising of this new house of God. Kovenhoven may well be the man of the same name, who was clerk of the Board of Trustees of the Hightstown Baptist Church, and was sent as missionary in 1786 to South River (Spotswood) to form a new congregation, a conjecture advanced by Robert W. Craig, a student of the history of the two Windsor Townships. His father of the same name had died, and he appears to be the only Kovenhoven resident in the area in the last quarter of the century. Apart from being a man of affluence, Kovenhoven emerges from the records as a man of organizational skills and business acumen, which he used not only to advance the cause of his religious convictions but also to establish a community center.

Penns Neck was churchless; Hightstown was a considerable distance to travel. Princeton was given over to Presbyterianism, and the only other congregation in the newly erected Township of West Windsor (1797) was also Presbyterian and seemingly without a building too, although the facts are not fully known. Kovenhoven's deed for an acre of land called upon the Baptists to build a church and establish a cemetery, but it specified that they must share their building with other Christian "sects" when not in use, if asked. (The Presbyterian congregation attempted a take-over in 1827 but was repulsed.)



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Under the lead carpenter, Elias Bailey (thought to have been brought from Middletown, as a man of that name was resident there at the time), the present frame edifice was put up in 1812, though not completed in details. Known Middletown names in the congregation were Grovers and Stouts. Financial help came from members of the Hightstown Church, and "without exception, almost all the inhabitants of Penn's Neck and Princeton."<sup>1</sup>

Although the church got off to a shaky start, it was able to raise \$500 in 1818 to pay off a debt and the following year found itself in a position to "finish this house" and a woman member contributed funds toward buying a stove. In 1815, upon calling a new minister, it offered as inducement the opportunity to run a Sabbath school, promising 25 children, each to pay \$2 a quarter. Four years later, under another pastor, the school was established, and the church trustees sent off a report to the Baptist Association in Trenton that there were 46 pupils enrolled, served by a superintendent and staff of seven teachers. Its size seems remarkable, and is subject to speculation whether it served as community school in the absence of one. Another forward-looking step taken in 1821 was the granting of the vote to women regarding church affairs. That year the body became officially incorporated. The Rev. John Segar of Hightstown came as supply every other Sunday, since once again the congregation lacked a preacher.

There were trying times in the decades that followed, with frequent loss of pastors. By mid-century, however, the congregation felt sure enough of itself to plan a move to Princeton a few miles away, where it expected to increase its membership and abandon its country character. A new church was built on then Canal Street on a lot obtained as a gift from a member of the prominent Stockton family, but the old meeting house was retained as well. The move did not please all the congregants, and shortly after many separated, forming a new body with permission to return to the Penns Neck edifice. This "West Windsor Baptist Church" dissolved about 1859, but services were continued on a periodic basis, and later on, on Sunday afternoons, in order to meet the conditions of the original deed from Kovenhoven. In 1874 the decision was reached to return to Penns Neck, as most of the members still resided there. The present name, Princeton Baptist Church at Penns Neck, was assumed to reflect the reuniting of the two congregations. During the intervals of non-use, the building had deteriorated to some degree. A leaking roof had caused damage to the plastered walls, and winds swept in through gaping clapboards. The Princeton church structure was

<sup>1</sup> The deed called for "a church for the performance of divine worship...according to the forms and modes used and established by the Baptist church."

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sold in 1877, and with the money obtained, work was begun on rehabilitating the aging meeting house.

The only major work on the edifice occurred at this time. After turning the frame on the lot to face the turnpike, it was resided and replastered; and though the records do not mention it, the present windows were probably installed then. At that time, or soon after, an addition of one bay for vestibule was approved. Corner pilasters marking dimensions of the sanctuary itself and of the addition represent the conservative stylistic feature indulged, retardataire for the times but suitable for the plain gable-fronted form. As Greek Revival temple style houses of worship had for decades been built by other denominations in the region, they perhaps felt comfortable with it as an accepted style. The Grecian enframing arch for front entrance is assumed to have been installed then but could have been added later. The belfry steeple with a spire (now gone) dates to this time.

In 1879, the tavern was put up for sale by the administrators of the estate of Noah Reed, last innkeeper. It had been unoccupied since his death. The minister L.O. Grenelle encouraged purchasing it, calling it an eyesore and insisting that "one of these institutions will go down, either the dram shop or the church."<sup>2</sup> According to a later historian, William Ulyat, sometime pastor, the tavern was "noted for its bad influence on young men and by its continual sale of intoxicating liquors where there was little demand for entertaining the traveling public."<sup>3</sup>

This purchase added another 1.89 acres to the church property, and the final 13/100 acre on which stood a house, was acquired this century and the dwelling removed. The final building program included the two-story addition for office and study at the pulpit end of the church and the erection of the Christian Education Building.

Red Lion/White Horse Tavern

At the beginning of the 19th century, the Schencks and Kovenhovens were still the largest landholders in the Penns Neck tract. The proposal of the Trenton and New Brunswick Turnpike Company to build a highway between these cities, as recorded with the state in an abbreviated description, suggests that the land was largely undeveloped. It is said to have been routed along an existing road that marked a division line between Schencks and Kovenhovens. While Princeton had developed into a thriving market and college town during the

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preceding century, settlement had not overflowed to the Penns Neck area, largely due to the manner of land investment in New Jersey.

William Kovenhoven, the settler, is credited with the building of the tavern on one of his lots at the intersection of the turnpike with the road joining Allentown and Princeton. It appears to have been an investment, with the intent of leasing it to professional hosts. In 1808, John Joline, one such, applied for renewal of a tavern license, stating that he had kept tavern here on the turnpike, opposite to Princeton, for the past year. Friends who signed his petition testified that he had 2 feather beds more than needed, house room, stabling, and provender. There is a thought that Joline had kept tavern in Princeton before taking up this new stand. He has been described as "jovial and obliging" and had a good rapport with the students at Princeton. It is claimed he "set a good table and kept good horses." In 1812 he was succeeded by George Follet, an Englishman, who it is said called the tavern the Red Lion. Tradition states that he carried his signboard to each place of business where he became proprietor. It is also said that Follet kept tavern at Princeton and had "a wide reputation for catering well and knowing how to please his guests."<sup>4</sup>

In 1819 Kovenhoven sold the tavern to Asher Temple for \$4000. Temple was another well-known figure. Prior to this purchase, he owned two stills. An unpaid debt got him into trouble, however, and a judgment was finally found against him. In 1827, the seized property was sold by the sheriff to Gooden Hall, a resident of New York City. Apparently, he permitted Temple to remain as host. For years he attracted local trade by managing horse races at Penns Neck, which was on the shady side of the law, although no action was taken against the activity until several years later. During this period the tavern was called the White Horse, as mentioned in Hall's sale of it to William Woodmansee in 1838. This was shortly after the Panic of 1837, and the price had dropped to \$2500. During Woodmansee's ownership over the next ten years it was frequently called by his name. Between 1848 and 1879, the tavern changed hands six times, interestingly enough being purchased at different times by two of the Kovenhoven name. The county history of 1883 gives a list of names of various tavern-keepers over the years. The final sale of 1873 reveals a sidelight on the business of tavern ownership, perhaps underscoring the gamble of entrepreneurship and explaining the peregrinations of proprietors from one location to another. The owners of the Red Lion/White Horse in 1873, a married couple named Pierson, decided to try their luck in running the Princessville Inn on the newer Princeton Turnpike, which came with seven acres, while at the same time its owner Noah Reed thought he would do better at their tavern. They made what amounted to a swap on the same day, the Piersons receiving \$4500 for their 2-acre property against the

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total of \$7500 they paid for the larger property. Possibly Reed was growing old, for he made his will two years later, and died within three years.

Reed's trade seemingly came from the local community rather than from travelers, and going by church members' reports, it had a bad influence on youth. Its earlier role as center of community action, meetings of the governing body during 1808 and the 1820s, a place of political campaigning and elections, holding of sheriff's vendues and auction of goods, had ended under changing times. The turnpike, never well-maintained, had been taken over by the Pennsylvania Railroad, who also had laid its tracks in the area, and the pattern of travel altered. The Delaware and Raritan Canal had also been constructed, as well as the additional Princeton Turnpike. The tavern, alternately called a hotel, was still under mortgage when Reed died. When it was put up for sale by his estate, the price had dropped. By happenstance, it was an opportune time for the church to buy it, having just re-established itself at Penns Neck, with a need for a parsonage.

A half dozen men of the congregation went into action readying the tavern for its new use, cleaning, papering, painting, and fitting it out, spending about \$500 in all. The pastor, L.O. Grenelle, wrote in his later account, "I moved into it with my family and we lived happily for years in it." In his opinion, "This is the next best thing the Church has ever done, to the erection of the house of worship."<sup>5</sup> The only alteration indicated was the removal of the side entrance to the tap room, which was replaced with the existing bay window.

The Church Minutes over the next decades contain references to periodic painting and repairs, leaving the impression that the outside skin was of clapboard. In 1904, it received another coat of paint and repairs totaling \$385. Sometime afterward, the cladding was changed to shingle stained brown, with a smart contrasting belt course of white, and two porches in Shingle style added. The louvered blinds were probably removed at this time.

The parsonage served during these years as a social hall as well. In 1925, the house was made into two duplex apartments. Although there is no discussion of the matter in the Minutes, it was doubtless based on the need for additional income. When the Rev. Charles Fredericks arrived in 1927, he was given a choice of apartments, and a furnace and a bathroom were added.

In 1929, improvements to U.S. Highway #1, the former turnpike, necessitated the moving of the parsonage from the right of way. Photographs taken at this time, before and after the move, show the house in its peak of condition, with

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awnings and front porch screened. The front porch opening was changed from end to center after the move. The wing had not yet been enlarged, as the internal end chimney is still in place, and only the ground-story windows on the principal facade had been changed to 2/2 sash. Since then, all the windows on the east side (parsonage unit) have been fitted with 2/2 sash replacing the original 9/6 and 6/6 sash.

Architectural and Cultural Significance

The church of meeting house simplicity serves to illustrate a facet of early religious architecture in America, and more specifically in New Jersey as practised by a conservative evangelical denomination. Erected at a time when older congregations of various beliefs were replacing their first houses of worship with larger more style-conscious ones, this first house of worship for a new-formed congregation of relatively recent settlers replicates the starkly simple style deemed appropriate for a "sanctuary" in the preceding century. An actual example of this plain and unadorned style of mid-18th century is the Baptist Meeting House ("Old Yellow") in Upper Freehold (National Register, 1975), and this very building historically relates to the Penns Neck congregation. Their forebears had come from Monmouth County and had worshipped at the mother church in Middletown, of which this was a branch. The Penns Neck Baptist Church is a survivor of this genre, and for this is valuable to the historical record.

Contemporary to it in time and a product, also, of the missionary outreach characteristic of this denomination, was the first Baptist Meeting House at the Clove on Staten Island, New York, organized in 1809 as a result of Manhattan preachers extending their labors to this remote locale, beginning in 1785. Like the Penns Neck congregation, after 24 years of meeting in houses, barns, and schools, these Baptists at last obtained land for a building. Their rectangular gable-roofed sanctuary was slightly smaller, 30 by 20 feet. One prominent family in the congregation contributed wood and did the carpentry. The history for the next half century is also similar--a progression of ministers, a shortage of funds, and an eventual branch church in a more prosperous community. The Clove Meeting House also had its adjacent burial yard with first interment in 1821. This mother church of Baptists on Staten Island is gone. The cemetery, however, after reaching a deplorable condition, has been taken over by the City of New York and administered as an historic cemetery, reflecting the value placed upon it by a Baptist historian as "the only visible evidence" that the congregation had ever existed.

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This Baptist Meeting House was the first and sole building of its denomination and one of only two congregations to serve the unchurched in the vast 6500-acre area of Penns Neck and the still larger West Windsor Township. It had both pastoral and congregational support from the older Hightstown Church and perhaps also from the Hopewell (Mercer County) congregation. By the time the Penns Neck edifice went up, these two congregations were ready for improvement and/or replacement of their first meeting houses. With stable established congregations and a somewhat more worldly view, their edifices are larger and display some elements of Federal style. The Old School Baptist Church (Hopewell), erected 1822, is of brick, with an impressive facade of various window styles including an oculus. The Hightstown Church, as shown in an 1844 woodcut, has quarter-segmental windows and oculus in its front gable peak and domed belfry. The existence of these Baptist churches of the same era illustrates what then constituted acceptable style for an old community and serves to underscore the importance of the survival of the Penns Neck meeting house as record of an earlier vernacular form still finding favor in new communities. Few examples exist today.

The church filled and still fills societal needs. As early as 1819, it organized a school for 46 children, and later formed a singing school. Periodically through the century, the Minutes contain statistics on Sabbath school classes, with good-sized staff of teachers. During the 1880s, the minister Grenelle reported 101 students in attendance. Building programs focussed on additional space for classrooms, with the final erection of the Christian Education Building in 1963, which now serves weekdays as day care center. The church was able to promote education because the clergy it hired were as a rule educated men. Some were seminary students in the Princeton Theological Seminary. Their pastors were called on occasion to serve at city churches.

The church was forward-looking on social issues, being well ahead of their time in giving women the vote in business matters, in 1821. They nurtured a black congregation in Princeton, until it was able to exist on its own as the Bright Hope Church in 1880, and afterward shared its baptistry with them. In 1922, the Bible Class organized the Penns Neck Community Club "to aid the civic, moral, intellectual and social welfare of the community." Within two years they erected a large building for the purpose, regarded in the 1930s as second in importance only to the church and the school.

The church has its resident pastor today and continues to hold weekly services, although its membership has declined. Burials still take place in the

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historic cemetery. Buildings and property are well-maintained. The church edifice was once again repainted recently by a volunteer crew. Highway #1 has edged ever closer to its entrance, and this remains its chief threat.

Red Lion Tavern/Parsonage

The tavern building, now serving as parsonage and rental unit, has significance in being representative of a type of building erected early in the 19th century. Although now in other use, it has been little altered. Beyond being a 180-year-old surviving example of a cultural artifact commonplace in early America, the tavern is singular in the fact that it was constructed for this use -- a place of public entertainment and lodging -- and not a private dwelling doubling as an inn. The knowledge of who built it and why, and the date of construction casts light on the entrepreneurship of the period. Compared with contemporary hostelries, the Red Lion is among the largest, with its 8-10 rooms, eight fireplaces, and semi-finished attic area. One of similar proportions once stood at Larison's Corner, near Ringoes, East Amwell Township, in Hunterdon County, erected 1798 after a half century of population growth. Another of three-story size was built by Moore Furman at Pittstown in Hunterdon County about 1800, replacing another, with the full intention of appealing to the local gentry and continuing to serve as an area-wide center of activities, the role of its predecessor. Probably more commonplace, were the smaller houses built for this purpose, such as the I-type frame dwelling, the Blawenburg Tavern, c. 1816, erected following the news that the Georgetown-Franklin Turnpike was about to be constructed.

Owner-builder\* William Kovenhoven clearly expected a good trade on the new, shorter, better surfaced Straight Turnpike between two important towns, with the possibility of also accommodating long-distance travelers through New Jersey from New York to Philadelphia. Proximity to Princeton, with its student population and affluent families was doubtless also considered. His choice of professional innkeepers with wide reputations as genial hosts made for its success in its early years; even after its sale to the colorful Asher Temple, it was well patronized by the local population as well as travelers. Members of the governing body of West Windsor Township held their meetings there in 1808 and 1820s,

\* Minutes of West Windsor Township in 1809 made a reference in passing to "William Kovenhoven's new tavern."

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and public business, including sheriff's vendues and elections occurred within its rooms. It faced down the competition from a rival tavern opened directly opposite it on the turnpike, which went out of business at mid-century. Members of the Kovenhoven family bought it back at different times, and other purchasers were non-local men, one from as far distant as New York City. Ownership ranged from two up to 13 years by one individual, with death sometimes the reason for sale. One widow, with her second husband, continued its operation.

At some point in its later years, probably after 1850, its reputation declined. Its clientele consisted of the community's young bloods, who patronized the tap room with its own side entrance. The final resident-owner Noah Reed died a few years after taking possession, still holding a mortgage. Its value had declined, perhaps with its reputation, and the church was therefore able to afford its purchase for a parsonage and rid the neighborhood of a nuisance.

The sale to the Baptist congregation was fortunate, as the structure may well have been razed at time of highway widening had this not occurred. Its size served the double purpose of pastor's residence and meeting rooms for church business and socials without need for change. Even its conversion into two apartments was accomplished with minimal alteration, and there have been no additions.

Although in outward appearance the tavern house appears to be a straightforward example of double-depth main block and kitchen ell, a 5-bay center-hall plan of Georgian derivation, its floor plan has subtle differences seemingly intentionally made for its function as an inn. Although undetectable to the eye, the entrance is slightly off-center, moved slightly to the right to give advantage to the other side of the house. This small advantage was probably given, as the stair hall was also placed off-center, claiming space on that side. The purpose of this appears to have been to increase the floor area for the public rooms to right of front entry -- the tap room and dining room, with kitchen behind in the ell. How commonplace or unique this plan is cannot be determined, as few inns of this period survive, or if extant have been considerably altered for other use.

The second story floor plan with additional rooms, one with numbered door, is of interest, too, if original. The entrance to the attic stairway from both flanking rooms, with original raised-panel doors still in place, reveals the lack of interest in personal privacy that existed at the time. The open area of attic, semi-finished only, to accommodate the more common traveler -- an arrangement noted by Moore Furman for his otherwise prestigious inn planned at Pittstown



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-- documents what is known of customs of the 18th century, apparently still acceptable.

The interior displays much of its original decor. Besides the front entrance door, there are several raised-panel doors, especially on the upper floor. Seven of 8 mantelpieces are of Federal style; components of three are reeded. The eighth mantelpiece is of Victorian form with Tudor arch opening and bracketed shelf. Located in the former tap room, now living room of parsonage, it could have been introduced by either the tavern keeper or the pastor. A simple chair rail is present in many of the rooms. Most of the surviving hardware consists of square rim locks with a variety of knobs, but two Suffolk latches with clover-shaped cusps remain on the doors to attic stairway. A Federal style corner cupboard for storing dishes and glassware (altered) still stands in the dining room. Similar but plainer cupboards of probable later date occupy corners of the east bedrooms. A board nailed to the attic wall at eye level, with a series of holes, may represent a means of hanging clothes on pegs. The interior ladder leading to a hatch in the roof is a feature rarely seen, although it is known that some houses, at least in cities, had this safety measure for putting out chimney fires in the 18th century. It may once have been more common, but if so, was eliminated when a new roof was installed.

For a public house of this size, with guests sleeping in the attic, it may well have been included also as an escape route in case of fire. It doubtless has survived since the inn continued in operation into the 1870s.

The Red Lion/White Horse Tavern, cum parsonage, is in architectural terms an extraordinarily successful rehabilitation. This adaptive re-use has preserved the original building in all its major features, without any wrenching changes or additions. Were it, imaginably, to be sold, it could be restored to original appearance as an important large-scaled early 19th-century tavern house without too great effort.

#### The Cemetery

The church burial yard, provided for in the deed of land for the meeting house, is closely associated with the founding families of the congregation and contains the graves of all those who made up its membership from then to the present. It is not only a history of a Baptist settlement but of the population at large which constituted 19th-century West Windsor Township. The stones are of simple lines, too late in time for mortuary folk art. The earliest, clustered

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near the church, contribute to the time-honored image of the country churchyard, recalling an age long vanished.

Summary:

The Baptist congregation was founded in 1787, within 50 years of the purchase of the Penns Neck Tract from William Penn's sons and its opening up for a straggle of settlers. The meeting house, still in use for regular Sunday services, is now (1988) 176 years old as a building, and the oldest religious edifice and only example of its architectural ecclesiastical type in West Windsor Township. The tavern/parsonage house is the oldest surviving inn and an example of a building specifically intended to serve this function. The burying ground serves an associative purpose in identifying the families that made up the congregation and brought the community of Penns Neck into being.

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1. The Rev. Peter Wilson, Preface to the Church Minutes of 1812, as cited in Thomas S. Griffiths, A History of Baptists in New Jersey. p. 155.
2. The Rev. L.O. Grenelle, "A Little Account of the Nine Years at Princeton and Penns Neck," Ms., in Papers of the Rev. William Ulyat, as quoted by Frank M. Updike, "The Princeton Baptist Church at Penns Neck", Vol. 2, p. 26.
3. The Rev. William C. Ulyat, "History of the Princeton Baptist Church Located at Penns Neck, New Jersey, from 1812 to 1880," in Ulyat Papers, as quoted in Updike, op.cit., p. 34.
4. Old Princeton's Neighbors. Federal Writers' Project, Works Progress Administration, N. J., p. 69.
5. Grenelle, op. cit., in Updike, p. 27.
6. Morris Bucks, "The Old Clove Baptist Church and Cemetery: 1809 to the Present." Staten Island Historian, Winter-Spring 4 (1987), New Series (Nos. 3 & 4), pp.25-28.
7. John W. Barber and Henry Howe, Early Woodcut Views of New York and New Jersey, p. 96. The Old School Baptist Church is known by personal experience.
8. Old Princeton's Neighbors, p. 66.
9. A photograph of the tavern at Larison's Corner, built 1798 and razed 1932, appears in A History of East Amwell, 1700-1800, published by the East Amwell Bicentennial Committee. (Ringo: 1976) At time of undated photograph, the tavern consisted of original unit and addition, making a 7-bay facade, with a 5-bay depth. It has two end chimneys in gables and one internal chimney on ridge. The Moore Furman tavern is described in the National Register nomination for Pittstown Historic District. The Blawenburg Tavern is described in the National Register nomination of the Blawenburg Historic District.

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Wilson, Peter (pastor at Hightstown), "Historical Account of the Congregation up to the Time of its Organization, 1787-1812," written as a preface to the Minutes of 1812. Wilson is also quoted in Griffith's history listed below.

Ulyat, William C. (sometime pastor of church), "History of the Princeton Baptist Church located at Penns Neck, New Jersey, from 1812 to 1880," unpublished MS. in the papers of William C. Ulyat in the repository of the Historical Society of Princeton.

Grenelle, L.O. (pastor of the church in the 1880s), "A Little Account of the Nine Years at Princeton and Penns Neck." Unpublished MS, in the Ulyat Papers. Mr. Grenelle had formerly been Superintendent of the Peddie School, Hightstown.

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Trenton and New Brunswick Turnpike. Proposed route recorded with the state,  
1804/5

Tavern license application by John Joline, 1808

Tax Ratables for West Windsor Township, 1810s, 1820s

West Windsor Township Minutes

Road Return, July 1806

Other Sources:

Barber, John W., and Henry Howe, Early Woodcut Views of New York and New Jersey  
(1844). Dover Publication reprint.

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Gordon, Thomas F., A Gazetteer of the State of New Jersey. Trenton: Daniel  
Fenton, 1834

Veterans' Graves Registration, Mercer County. Works Progress Administration,  
1937

National Register nominations: Upper Freehold (Ye Old Yellow) Baptist Meeting  
House, 1975; Blawenburg Historic District, Somerset County, on State Regis-  
ter and in process for National Register placement; Pittstown Historic  
District, Hunterdon County, in process of review for State Register.

Telephone Interviews:

Louise Connolly, longtime member of the church.

James B. Lynch, Librarian, American Baptist Historical Society, Rochester, N.Y.

Elizabeth Fredericks, daughter of the Rev. Charles Fredericks, who became pastor  
in 1927.

Frank M. Updike, church historian, author of its two-volume history. Mr. Updike  
contributed the major research for this nomination.

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Vaughn, Archer, longtime member of the church.

Mrs. Von Schwerdtner, clerk and historical researcher, Hightstown Baptist Church

Correspondence: Robert W. Craig, Office of New Jersey Heritage, January 1989

Maps:

Map of Mercer County, New Jersey. J.W. Otley & J. Keily. Camden, N.J. 1849

Atlas of Mercer County. Everts & Stewart, 1875

Cemetery Burials

Princeton Baptist Churchyard, Penns Neck, published in the Genealogical Magazine  
of New Jersey Vol. 30, Numbers 3/4 (July/October 1955)

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Photographs

All the photographs were taken by photographer Arthur Brecknell of Belle Mead, N.J., in October 1988, and negatives are in his possession. Two photographs were re-photographed from prints made at an unknown date by a church member.

1. Church building, camera facing NE
2. Church building, camera facing easterly across Highway #1. Shows how close highway is to church.
3. Church building, camera facing westerly scanning the 19th-century graves, showing their relationship to church.
4. Cemetery, camera facing east-northerly, showing oldest grave stones.
5. Tavern/parsonage, camera facing northerly.
6. Tavern/parsonage, camera facing southward, showing original fenestration on west gable wall.
7. Christian Education Building, camera pointing west-northerly (non-contributing).
8. Church complex, camera pointing West and by North (wide angle lens). There is a certain distortion, which makes the church appear closer to the other two buildings than it is.
9. Overview of church property from highway. Camera facing East by North. Taken from the west side of the traffic circle. Shows busy traffic (which is constant). Rented Realty Office (former gas station) on far corner of circle. Excluded from nomination. Impressive size of parsonage is best appreciated from this view.
10. Church interior, camera facing South by East. Open door leads to office addition and choir-robing room.
11. Church interior, camera facing easterly to auditorium (sanctuary) front.
12. Church interior, camera facing East, showing pulpit and choir area. Door at left leads to stairs in office addition where choir robes.
13. Church interior, camera facing easterly, toward pastor's preaching platform.
14. Church interior, camera facing West to entry vestibule.
15. Tavern/parsonage, camera facing North; exterior entranceway, main facade, showing raised-panel original door.
16. Tavern/parsonage, camera facing NE: corner cupboard in (presumed) dining room of tavern--east rear room.
17. Tavern/parsonage, camera facing SE: rear room, east side, ground story. Shows style of mantelpiece used in tavern in plain variant; also chair rail type found throughout house.

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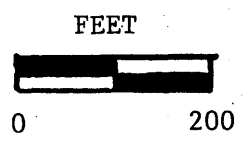
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18. Tavern/parsonage, camera facing NE, front bedroom, east side. Shows mantel identical to one in dining room on floor below (reeded mantelpieces are on other side of house).
19. Tavern/parsonage, camera facing SW: rear room, 2nd story, west side, showing more refined detailing of mantelpieces of west rooms.
20. Tavern/parsonage, camera facing NW: room, second story, over front vestibule (tenant's bathroom). Reverse side of raised-panel door shows # "3" near top, center.
21. Tavern/parsonage, camera facing East: rear room 2nd story, west side. Original 6-panel door to attic stairway. Late-type Suffolk latch; wood pull. Baseboard details vary slightly room to room.
22. Tavern/parsonage, camera facing S. Shows old worn stairs to attic between plastered walls.
23. Tavern/parsonage, camera facing South: shows board partition, white-washed, with strip (for clothes pegs?) attached in attic
24. Tavern/parsonage, camera facing South by East: ladder to roof hatch.



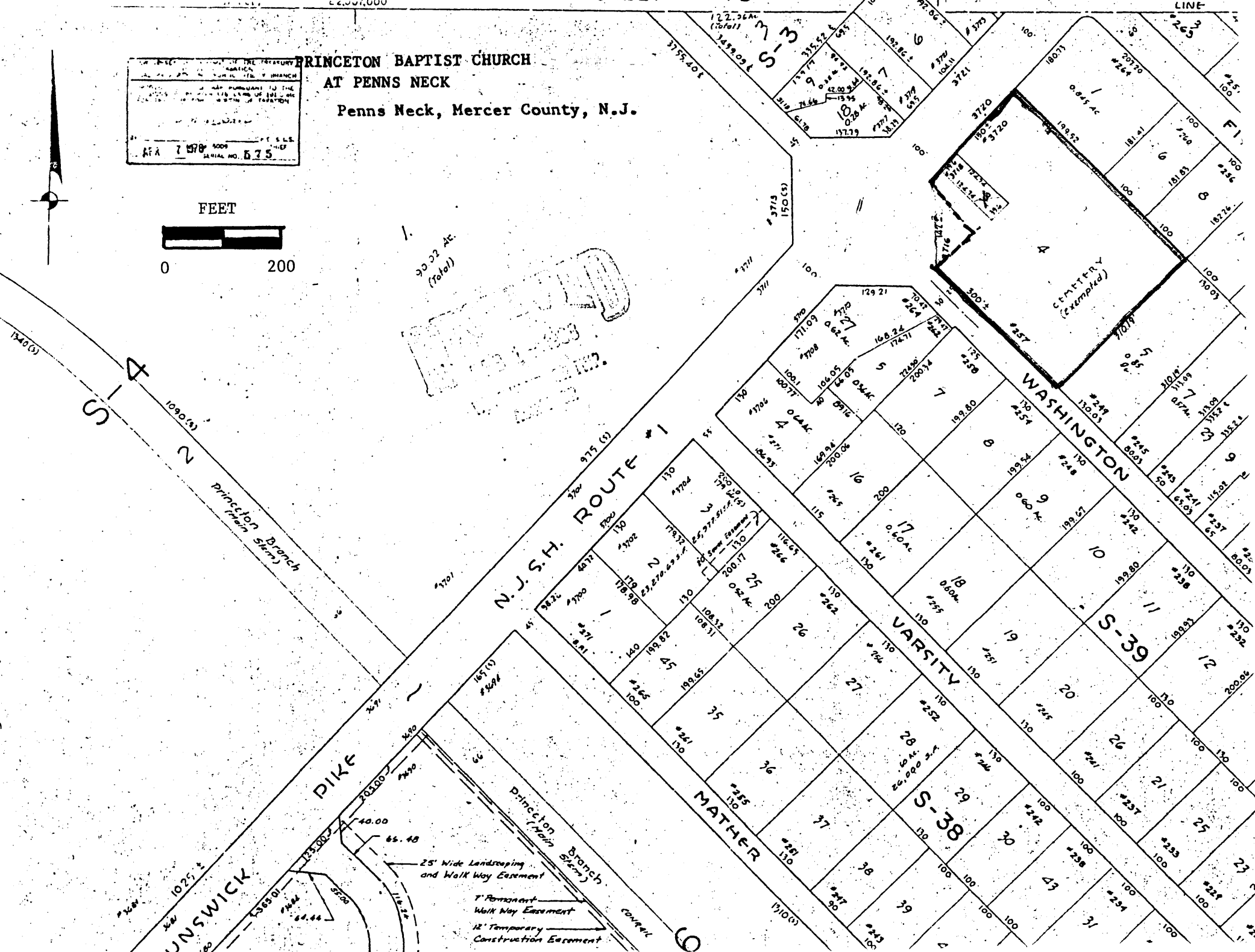
PRINCETON BAPTIST CHURCH  
 AT PENNS NECK  
 Penns Neck, Mercer County, N.J.

OFFICE OF THE TREASURER  
 MERCER COUNTY  
 PENNSYLVANIA  
 THE PROPERTY IS SUBJECT TO THE  
 TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF THE  
 PLAT AND THE RECORDING ACT  
 OF THE STATE OF PENNSYLVANIA  
 AREA 7 578 5005  
 SERIAL NO. 525



30.02 Ac.  
 (Total)

**RECORDED**  
 1978 JUN 15 10:00 AM  
 1978 JUN 15 10:00 AM



25' Wide Landscaping  
 and Walk Way Easement

7' Permanent  
 Walk Way Easement

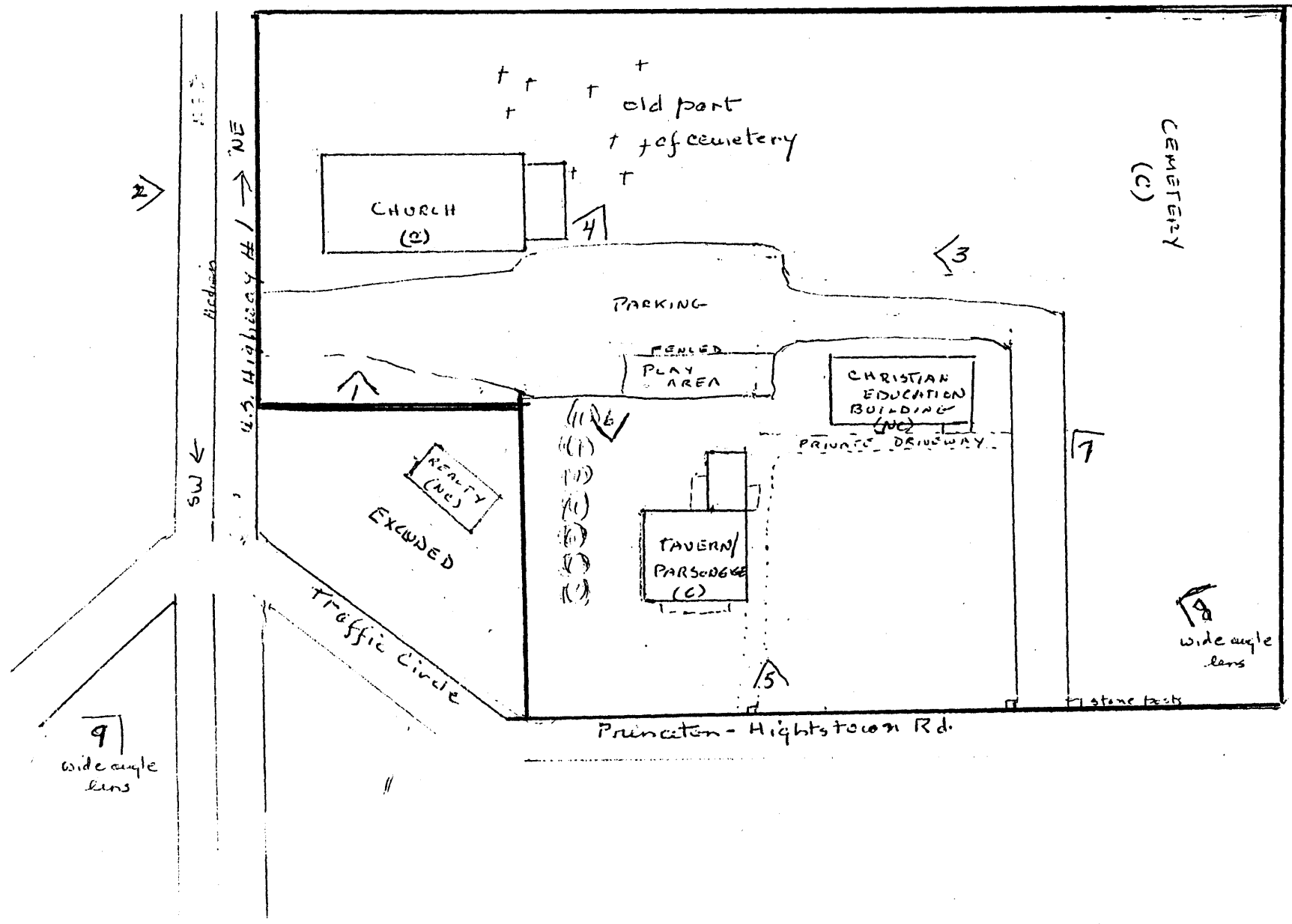
12' Temporary  
 Construction Easement

PRINCETON BAPTIST CHURCH  
AT PENNS NECK  
Mercer County, N.J.



not to scale

> indicates  
photograph  
and direction



2

NE

Highway

U.S. Highway #1

SW

CHURCH  
(C)

old part  
of cemetery

4

PARKING

FENCED  
PLAY  
AREA

CHRISTIAN  
EDUCATION  
BUILDING  
(C)

PRIVATE DRIVEWAY

TAVERN/  
PARSONAGE  
(C)

CEMETERY  
(C)

7

8  
wide angle  
lens

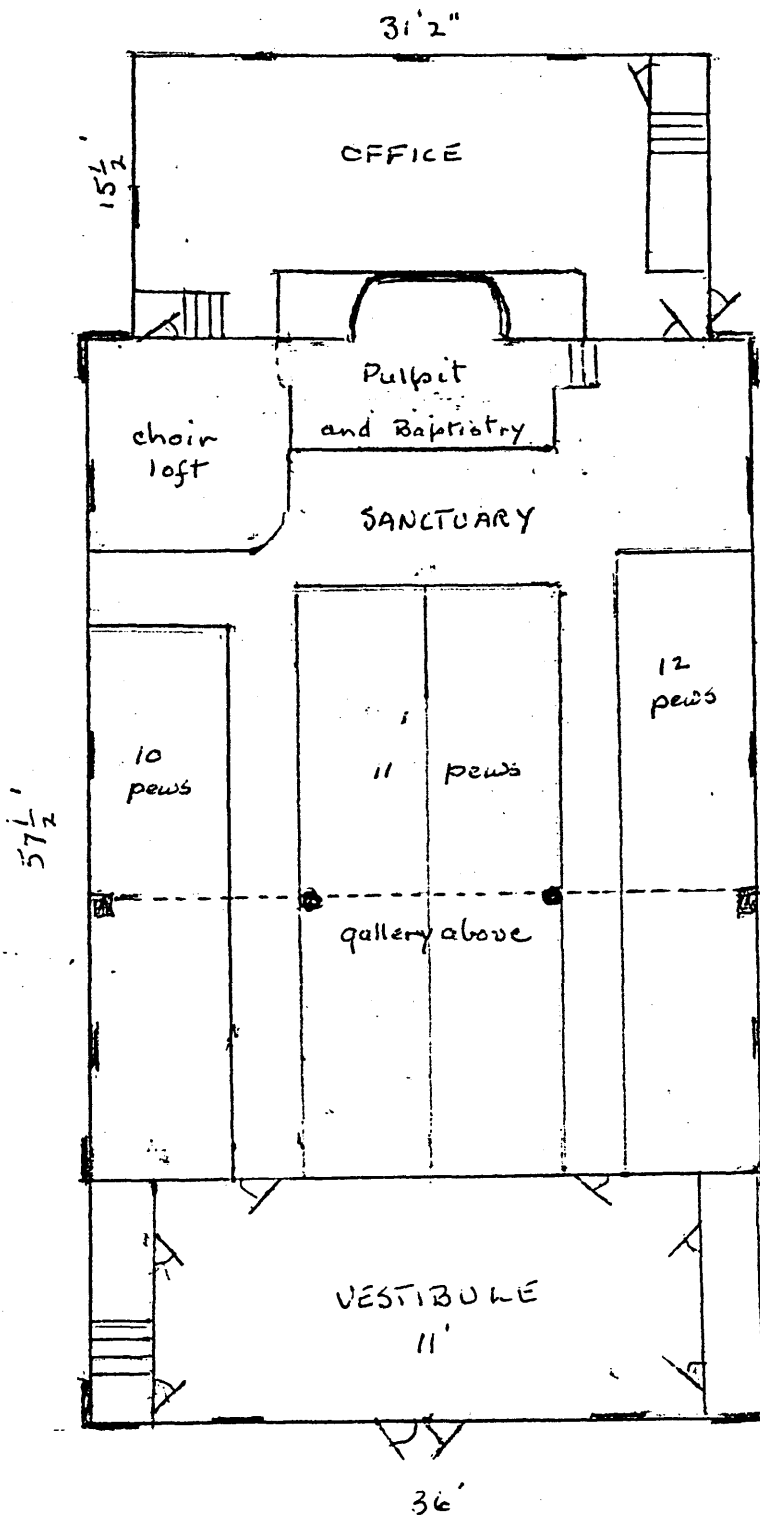
NEARBY  
NEED  
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Traffic Circle

Princeton - Hightstown Rd.

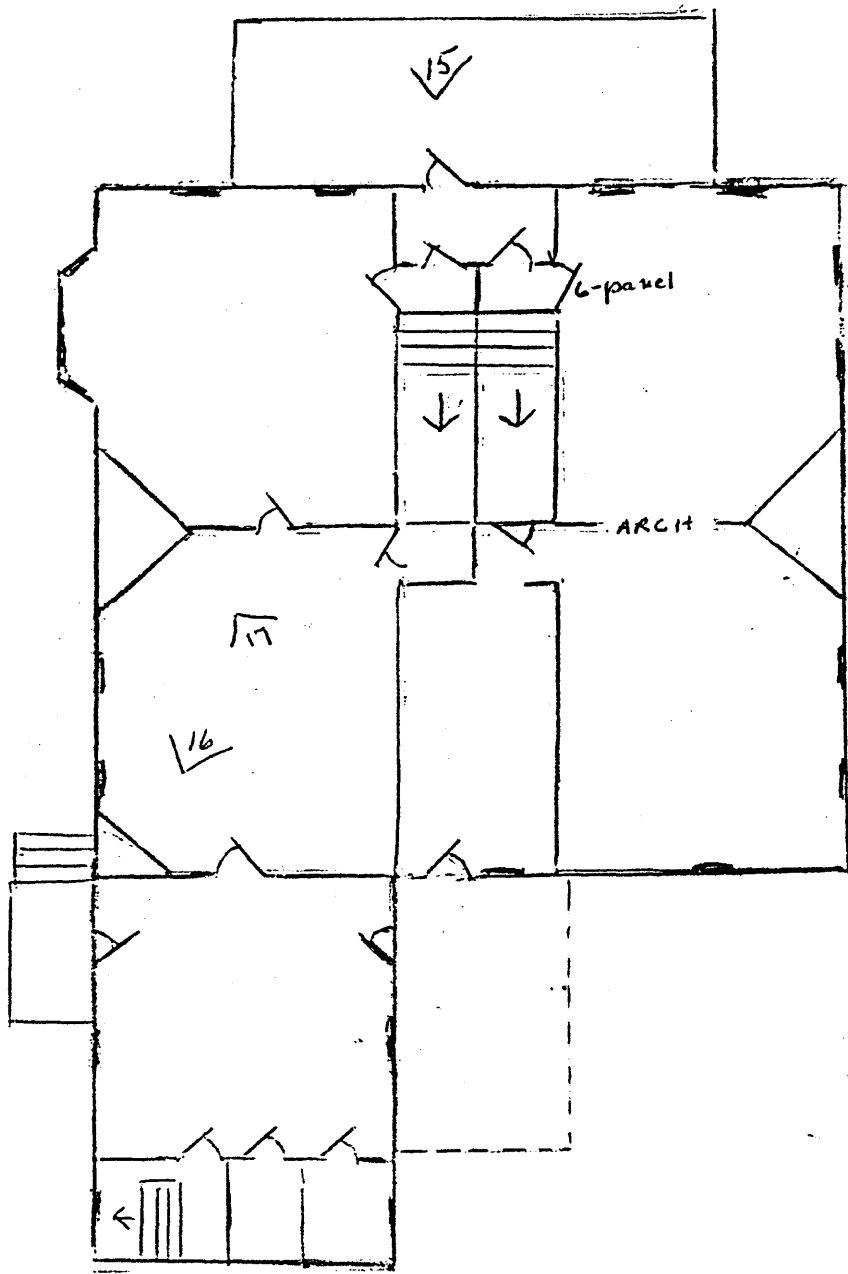
9  
wide angle  
lens

PRINCETON BAPTIST CHURCH  
At Penns Neck  
Mercer County, N.J.



Scale: 1" = 10'

PRINCETON BAPTIST CHURCH AT PENNS NECK  
Penns Neck, Mercer County, N.J.

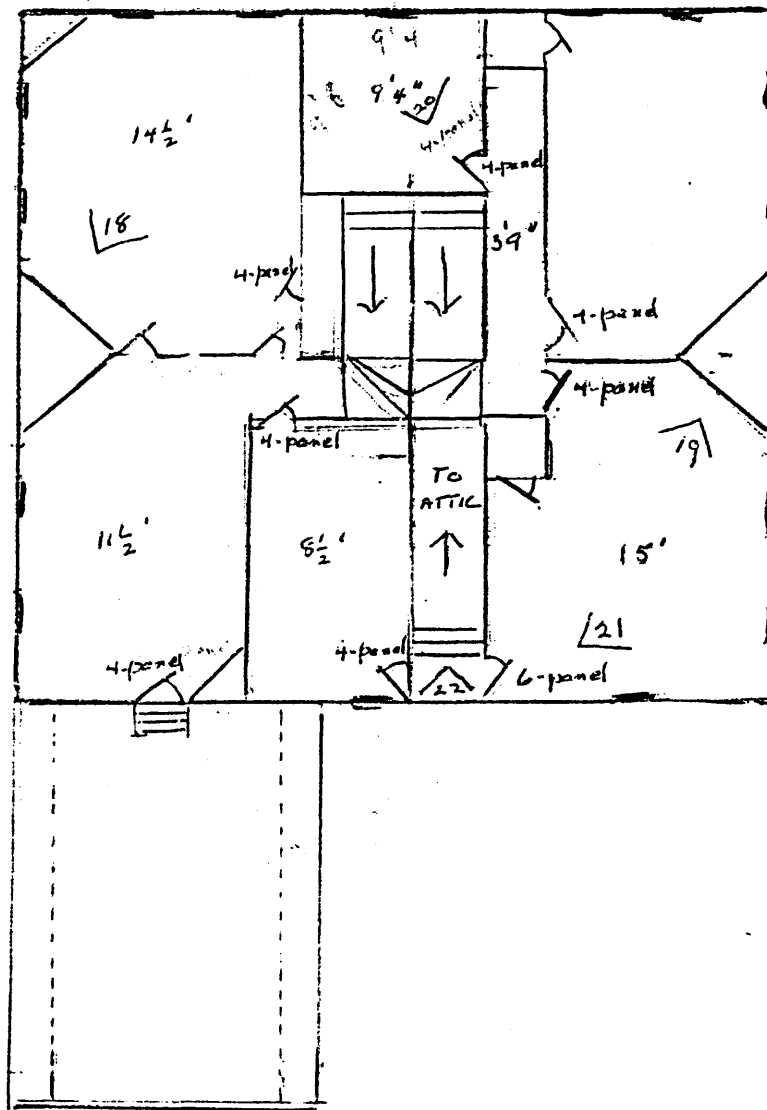


GROUND STORY  
Tavern House

Scale 1" = 10'

PRINCETON BAPTIST CHURCH AT PENNS NECK

Penns Neck, Mercer County, N.J.



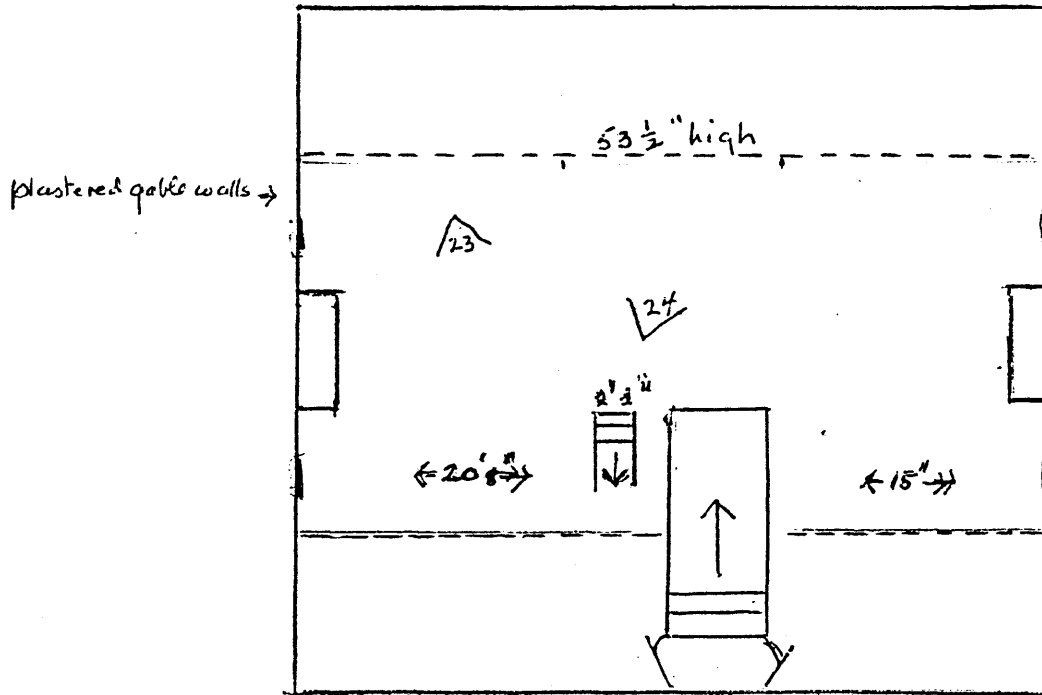
SECOND STORY

Tavern House

Scale 1" = 10'

PRINCETON BAPTIST CHURCH AT PENNS NECK

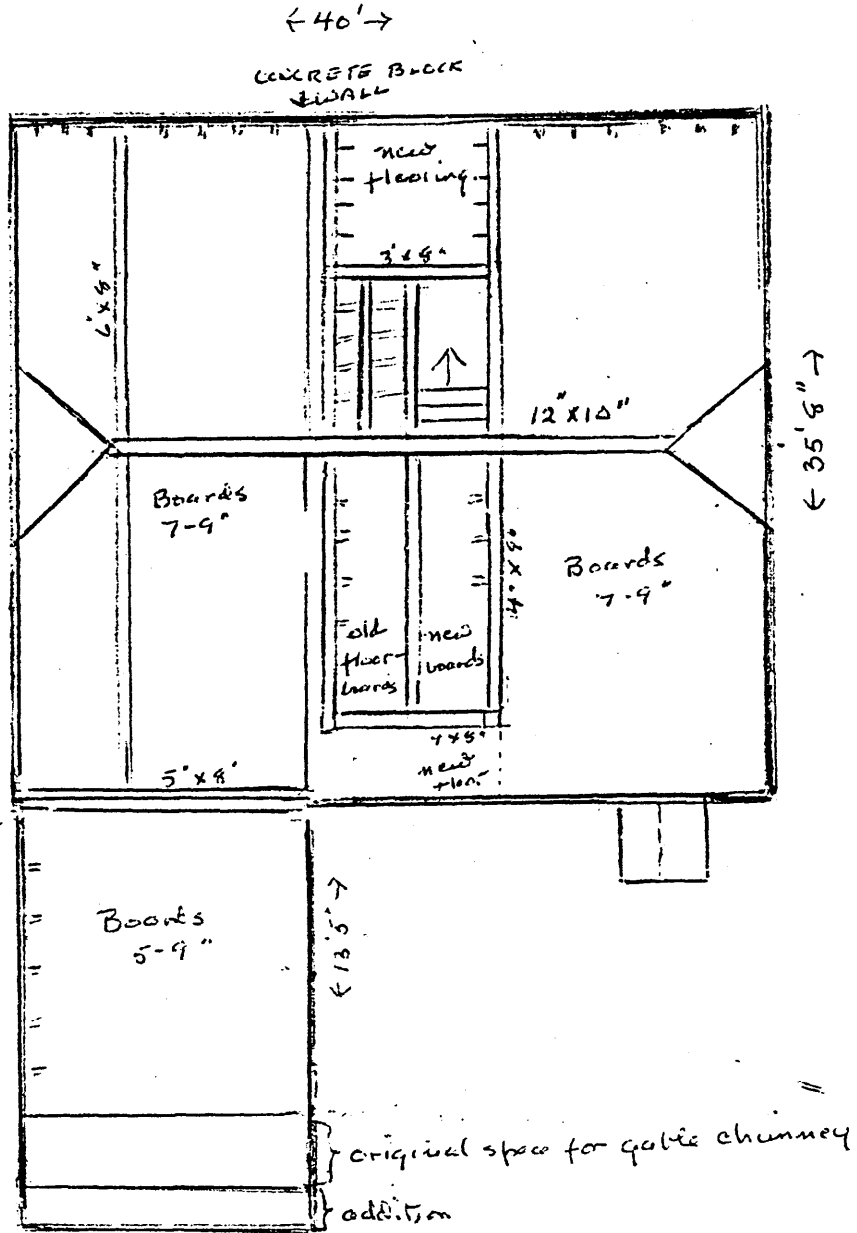
Penns Neck, Mercer County, N.J.



ATTIC  
Tavern House

Scale: 1" = 10'

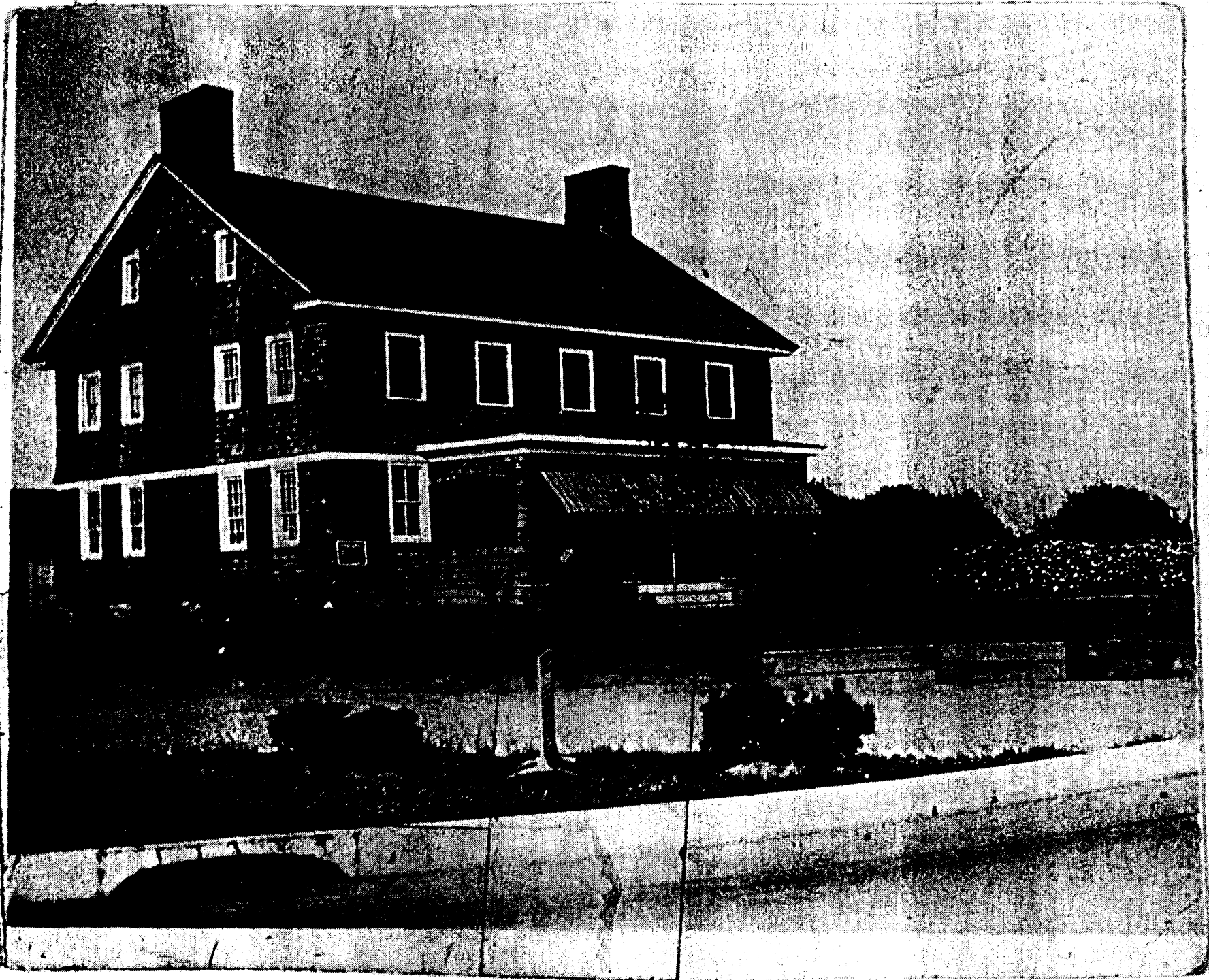
PRINCETON BAPTIST CHURCH AT PENNS NECK  
Penns Neck, Mercer County, N.J.



CELLAR  
Tavern House

Scale 1" = 10'

PRINCETON BAPTIST CHURCH AT PENNS NECK, Penns Neck, Mercer County, N.J.



Tavern/Parsonage House at its new location fronting on the Princeton-Hightstown Road (also known as Washington Road).



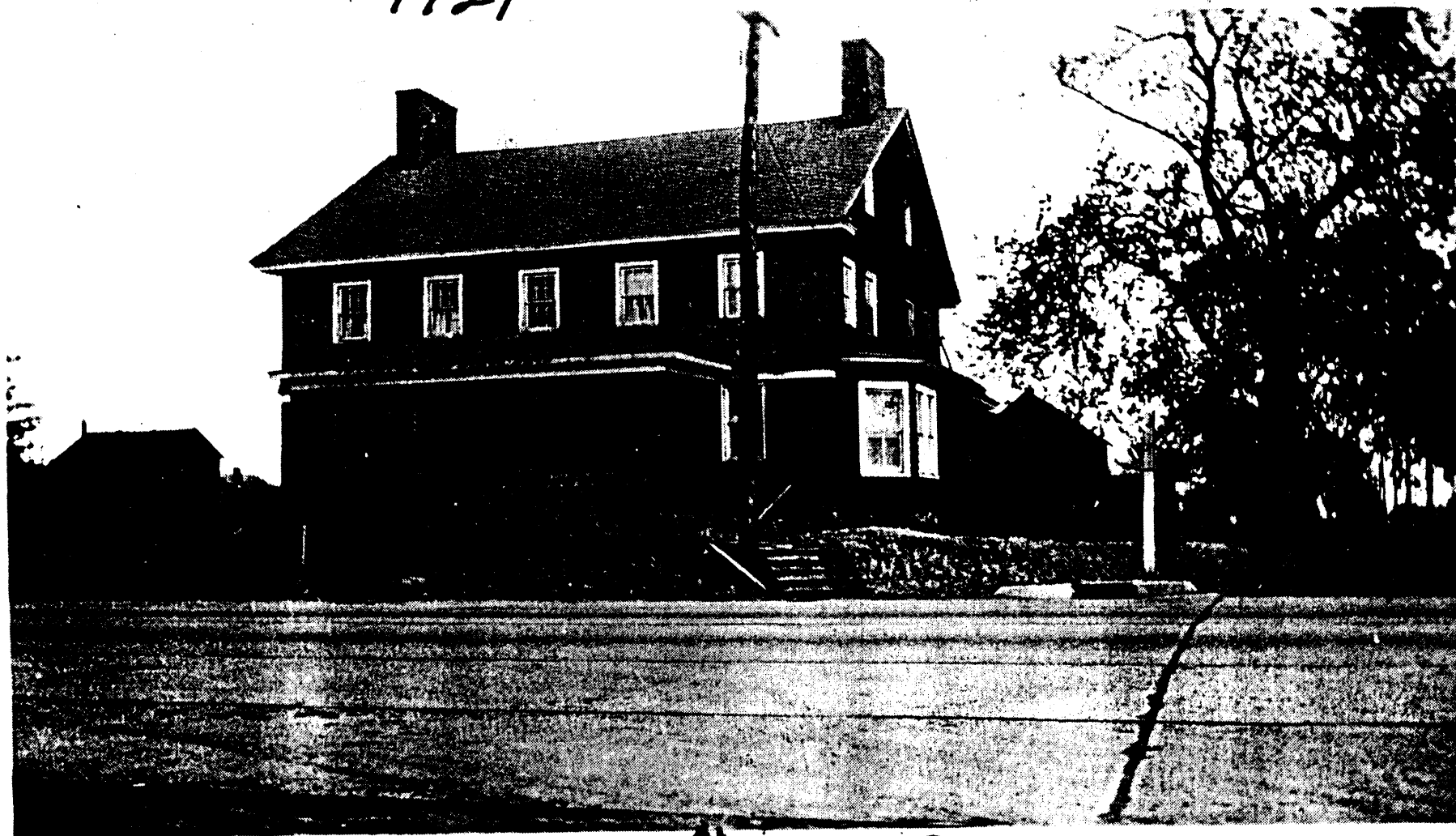
PRINCETON BAPTIST CHURCH AT PENNS NECK  
Mercer County, N.J.



Tavern/Parsonage House before its relocation. U.S. Highway # 1 has encroached on its site to its very porch, possibly explaining why the stairs are at porch end. Since date of photograph, a traffic circle has been created at the intersection, which represented a further encroachment on this corner.

PRINCETON BAPTIST CHURCH AT PENNS NECK  
Penns Neck, Mercer County, N.J.

1929



1929

Tavern/Parsonage House before its relocation to approximate site of building in background. Signpost at corner (perhaps same) served as a reference point in all deeds for tavern property going back to about mid-19th century. Highway has now been widened to 4 lanes with shoulders and separated by concrete median. Barn to left (north) is gone.