

4810

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

1. Name of Property

Historic name: First United Presbyterian Church of Braddock

Other names/site number: NA

Name of related multiple property listing:
NA

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

2. Location

Street & number: 724 Parker Avenue

City or town: Braddock State: PA County: Allegheny

Not For Publication: Vicinity:

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

___ national ___ statewide local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

___ A ___ B C ___ D

	
Signature of certifying official/Title: <u>Deputy SAPO</u>	Date <u>10/30/2019</u>
_____ State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government	

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In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official: _____ **Date** _____

Title : _____ **State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government** _____

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
 determined eligible for the National Register
 determined not eligible for the National Register
 removed from the National Register
 other (explain: _____)



Signature of the Keeper

12/30/19
Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private:
- Public – Local
- Public – State
- Public – Federal

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Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

- Building(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u> </u>	buildings
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	sites
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	structures
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	objects
<u>1</u>	<u> </u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

RELIGION/Religious Facility—church

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Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Vacant/Not in Use

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE VICTORIAN/Romanesque

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: Brick, stone

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Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary Paragraph

The First United Presbyterian Church of Braddock is a compact Akron-auditorium plan church building on a sloped site one block uphill from Braddock Avenue, the commercial main street of the City of Braddock, PA. It faces northeast onto Parker Avenue and stands adjacent to the Carnegie Free Library of Braddock, the most important building in the community, lending importance to the church's site and setting. The church was constructed in 1893 of red brick on a coursed sandstone foundation in the Richardsonian Romanesque Style. Complex massing, two entrance towers, and multiple roof forms break up the asymmetrical facade. Windows are framed in wood and set deeply into the brick walls. On the interior, an auditorium-style sanctuary includes a pipe organ donated by Andrew Carnegie. The auditorium adjoins an Akron plan arrangement of a large lecture room, which can be opened or closed to the auditorium via a rolling partition, and smaller Sunday school classrooms. The church also contains a parlor, office, and lavatories on the ground floor, a mezzanine level with a balcony overlooking the sanctuary and two upstairs rooms, and a basement with a kitchen, support and storage spaces, and a large hall. The basement was renovated in 1954 but otherwise, very little in the building has altered since its construction. Therefore, the integrity of the church is excellent.

Narrative Description

Setting and Site

The First United Presbyterian Church of Braddock is a compact, 1 1/2 story, Richardsonian Romanesque Style church building constructed on a sloped site one block uphill from Braddock Avenue, the commercial main street of the City of Braddock, PA (photos 1-2). The church faces northeast onto Parker Ave., which runs parallel to Braddock Ave., in a neighborhood of mixed residential, institutional, and religious uses. It stands adjacent to the Carnegie Free Library of Braddock, located at the corner of Library St. and Parker Ave., and near another church of similar age and scale (First Methodist Episcopal Church of Braddock, now vacant); some houses; and the Classical Revival former United States Post Office of Braddock, now rehabilitated as housing (photos 3-5). To the northwest is a vacant lot. The rear of the property slopes steeply downward to a stone retaining wall which holds the site above the alley, Maple Way, between Braddock and Parker avenues.

Exterior

The primary facade is built directly to the sidewalk on Parker Ave. on a coursed sandstone foundation which rises in height as the street slopes downward toward the library to the east (photo 6). The walls are red brick laid in a running bond. Windows are framed in wood and set deeply into the brick walls. Complex massing and multiple roof forms break up the facade into four distinct sections. From east to west, these are:

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A three-story tower, square in plan, defines the corner of the church closest to the library. A flight of stone steps ascends the height of the foundation to a broad landing in front of a pair of wooden double doors. The stairs and landing have a decorative wrought-iron railing. The doors are set in an arched opening and surmounted by a lunette transom window. The doorway interrupts a stone belt course present about one-third of the way up the first story of the tower. Centered above the doorway is a roughly square window divided vertically into two fixed sash. Several courses of corbeling and dentils run above this window and between the piers that emphasize the four corners of the tower. Above this decorative brickwork, the tower is organized into three bays, each containing a narrow window on the second floor and attic levels. The pyramidal roof is clad in asphalt shingle and topped by a simple finial.

Northwest of this, a steep gable rises above the section of the church containing the sanctuary. This has four arched stained glass windows on the first floor and a single, large semi-circular stained glass window on the balcony level. The window's arch is surrounded by corbeled brickwork, and a substantial stone belt course serves as its sill. More corbeling in a stepped pattern defines the eaveline of the gable, and there are three narrow arched windows in its peak.

The western tower has somewhat shorter and wider proportions than the eastern one. A doorway, identical to that in the eastern tower, is reached by a short flight of concrete stairs with a simple iron railing and a concrete ramp from the sidewalk. One arched stained glass window is situated west of the doorway. Above the doorway's arch are a pair of roughly square windows, each divided vertically into two fixed sash. Corbeling and dentils, identical to those in the eastern tower, run above these windows between the brick piers at the tower's corners. Above this is a row of four single-pane windows. The uppermost level of this tower contains an arcade of five openings framed by corbeled piers and a simple corbeled cornice. A brick chimney rises on the eastern side of the pyramidal slate roof.

A one-story projecting bay marks the westernmost section of this facade. Each facet of the bay contains an arched stained glass window. Corbels and dentils at the cornice replicate those found on the church's towers. The slate roof is topped by a finial.

The church's west side facade is dominated a tall, sharply-pitched gable. This has a central arched stained glass window flanked on either side by a pair of smaller arched stained glass windows. A single, small, nearly square window with a single fixed sash is centered in the wall above the central window, and a single, narrow arched window in the peak of the gable above this. (Photo 7)

The east side facade of the church faces the rear of the Braddock Library building across a narrow paved passageway, which is fenced from the street by a tall, decorative, picketed wrought iron gate. At its northern end, this elevation displays the side of the church's northeastern tower. This has an array of three arched stained glass staircase windows between the stone belt course and the line of corbels and dentils atop the second floor. Above this, detailing is identical to the front. A large gable south of the tower contains a two-story-height, arched stained glass window flanked by slightly smaller stained glass windows on either side. A projecting bay completes the composition of the east side facade and wraps to the rear. A flight of stone stairs near the rear of this facade provides access to the private doorway of the church office. (Photo 9)

The church's rear elevation stands high on its sloped site above the alley, Maple Way, between Braddock and Parker avenues. The irregularly-coursed stone foundation stands a full story in height and contains several rectangular windows of a variety of sizes and proportions whose insulated double glazing was likely installed when the basement was remodeled in 1954. Above this is one brick story with several

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rectangular window openings and two blind arched openings. The rectangular openings contain one-over-one double-hung sash. The fourth through sixth bays from the west constitute a projecting bay. As elsewhere in the building, corbeling and dentils define the cornice. A tall, steep gable, clad in slate, rises above the cornice and in front of the rest of the roofscape atop the section of the building east of the bay. (Photo 8)

Interior

The church has a finished basement of utilitarian design which was remodeled in 1954.¹ The basement has a poured concrete floor and plaster walls and ceilings. It contains a kitchen, storage and utility rooms, restrooms, and a large hall which can be divided into two rooms via paneled wooden folding doors. (Photo 10)

On the ground floor, each pair of double entrance doors leads into a vestibule with plaster walls, a tongue-in-groove dark-stained wooden ceiling, and honey-stained oak wainscoting (photos 11-12). Staircases are located off of the vestibules. Only the eastern staircase leads up to the church's mezzanine level; both staircases lead down to the basement. The staircases have carved oak newel posts and turned balusters.

The church's cruciform auditorium-style sanctuary occupies approximately the eastern three-quarters of the ground floor plan (photos 13-15). Three sections of scroll-back oak pews are arranged in an arc formation facing the pulpit platform. Behind the pulpit is a pipe organ in a paneled oak case, surrounded by a plaster arch painted with the legend "Worship The Lord In The Beauty Of Holiness." The sanctuary has plaster walls with paneled oak wainscoting, a carpeted floor, and a vaulted tongue-in-groove ceiling supported by trios of engaged columns at the room's corners. The balcony, on the south wall, is faced in oak paneling. A crystal chandelier hangs from the ceiling's central point. Stained glass windows of geometric and floral design light the sanctuary's south and east walls. A Celtic cross is painted on the west wall above a broad opening into the adjoining lecture room (photos 15-16). The opening is fitted with rolling doors that can be raised or lowered to open or close the lecture room from the sanctuary. Two smaller classrooms join the lecture room to the north and south (photos 16-17). The southern room has been closed off by the installation of painted plywood in the opening between it and the lecture room, one of the few alterations to the church since its construction. The lecture room and classrooms have dark-stained wood wainscoting.

A choir room behind the organ is flanked by an office to the east and a parlor, originally designated for ladies, to the west. The parlor and office have heavy ornamental marble fireplace surrounds, plaster walls, and carpeted floors. Each adjoins a lavatory off of a small hall. The parlor contains a bay window facing the rear (south) of the property. The office has built-in cabinetry and its own door to the outside.

The mezzanine level contains the balcony, open to the sanctuary (photo 20), and a simple, roughly square room at either end (photos 21-22). The room at the eastern end contains a hatch in the wall with access to the upper areas of the tower.

Integrity

The First United Presbyterian Church of Braddock has a high degree of integrity. Its original location and setting, adjacent to the Carnegie Library of Braddock and amid the other churches and houses near the intersection of Library Street and Parker Avenue, are intact and continue to signify the status and means

¹ "One Hundredth Anniversary of the First United Presbyterian Church, Braddock, Pennsylvania" (Church booklet, 1964), np.

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of the congregation that built it. Its original design, materials, and workmanship have scarcely been altered since the church's construction. Other than the renovation of the basement and a few minor changes to the interior, such as the installation of carpeting and the closure of the passageway between the lecture room and the classroom to its south, the church exhibits little consequence of the passage of time since its construction. The First United Presbyterian Church of Braddock continues to convey the feeling and association of an established church conscious of making an architectural statement on a par with its eminent neighbors.

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- B. Removed from its original location
- C. A birthplace or grave
- D. A cemetery
- E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F. A commemorative property
- G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

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Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Architecture

Period of Significance

1893

Significant Dates

1893

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

John L. Beatty

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Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The First United Presbyterian Church of Braddock is locally significant under Criterion C for Architecture. It is a skillfully-designed, strategically-located, high-integrity example of a building type, the neo-medieval auditorium church, which combined two simultaneous, distinctly American movements in religious architecture of the time: the Richardsonian Romanesque style and the Akron-auditorium plan. Together, these expressed the vitality and public relevance of the church through exterior architecture derived from historic precedents and interior spatial arrangements inspired by modern theaters. Recent ideas about organized, age-graded religious education were also built into the church's plan. First United Presbyterian's small scale and its site, among houses uphill from the business district and adjacent to the Carnegie Free Library of Braddock, reflected a view of the church as a religious "home" that was also part of the public life of Braddock. Its period of significance is 1893, the year of its construction.

The church also meets Criteria Consideration A as a religious building that derives its primary significance from Architecture.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

History and Development of Braddock

Named after the British general defeated there in the French and Indian War, Braddock developed slowly until the last quarter of the 19th century. The last reported Native Americans left the area around 1820, and the European settlers on the fertile Monongahela River floodplain engaged mainly in trapping, trading, and farming.² The Pennsylvania Railroad connected to Braddock in 1850, and the village incorporated as a borough in 1867.

Following the Civil War, Braddock experienced rapid growth and change as western Pennsylvania's booming new iron and steel industries sought large sites near Pittsburgh with good river and rail access. Braddock's advantages in this regard attracted Andrew Carnegie, who optioned 100 acres of land there with his brother Thomas and partner William Coleman in 1872. They began construction on a new steel mill the next year, and the Edgar Thomson Works opened in 1875. Carnegie named the factory after the president of the Pennsylvania Railroad, whose clientele he hoped to attract.

In 1889, Carnegie donated the first of his free libraries to Braddock (NRHP 1973, NHL 2012). Constructed on the corner of Library Street and Parker (then Church) Avenue, the library became the center of the community.³ Its presence helped to establish a desirable area around this intersection, just uphill from the borough's main thoroughfare, Braddock Avenue.

By 1890, Braddock had a population of more than 8500 and growing. Immigrants from England, Scotland, Ireland, Wales, Holland, Germany, Scandinavia, Italy, Hungary, Poland, Russia, and other eastern European countries filled positions in the mills ranging from unskilled labor to management. The community adapted to their needs. Heavily-traveled Braddock Avenue, the old military route between

² Robert M. Grom, *Braddock, Allegheny County* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2008), 23, 29.

³ "Carnegie Free Library of Braddock," National Historic Landmark Nomination (Washington, D.C.: National Park Service, 2012), 16.

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Braddock and Fort Pitt, became the borough's main street, filling with department stores, grocers, and other merchants. Substantial banks were a sign of the borough's prosperity. Housing was built on the river flats close to the mills and up the hill into North Braddock. The Carnegie Library nearly doubled its original size in 1893, expanding to become a community center with the addition of more stacks and reading space, a swimming pool, indoor basketball court, duckpin bowling lanes, a barber shop, and a music hall seating nearly 1000. In the early 20th century, the borough gained a three-story municipal building, a hospital, and a post office. The latter was constructed on Parker Avenue, where the library and a concentration of churches—including First United Presbyterian—brought foot traffic, but where more space was available than on Braddock Avenue. Amid Braddock's homes, businesses, and civic institutions, religious congregations built houses of worship which preserved and extended social ties and the cultural practices of immigrant communities.

Braddock reached its peak population of almost 21,000 in 1920, but declined along with the American steel industry after World War II. Houses were abandoned and businesses closed. Crippled by over a decade of deferred maintenance, the Carnegie Library closed in 1974 and was slated for demolition until rescued by a grassroots group of supporters led by its last librarian; the library reopened in phases beginning in 1983.⁴ Unlike many steel mills, the Edgar Thomson Works did not close, but workers and businesses departed for the suburbs, draining the borough of its population and tax base. Braddock was designated a distressed municipality in 1988.

The First Presbyterian Church of Braddock

Between 1830 and 1917, as Braddock grew and prospered, 44 churches were established there, beginning with the First Christian Church. Early services were conducted in private homes, but congregations soon raised money to build dedicated houses of worship reflecting the traditions, practices, symbolism, and social standing of their members. According to data collected by the Rev. Percy H. Gordon and published by Rev. James V. Wright in his article, "Churches," for a historical compilation in 1917, the First United Presbyterian Church of Braddock was the fourth to be established in the boroughs of Braddock, North Braddock, and Rankin.⁵

Founded by pastors from the Church of England who had adopted Presbyterian views, the Presbyterian denomination in Pennsylvania was first known as the Associated Reformed Church. In 1858, its various synods in Pittsburgh consolidated in the United Presbyterian Church of North America. The First United Presbyterian Church of Braddock was founded in 1864 when a commission from the Westmoreland Presbytery admitted 25 members into a new congregation.⁶

From 1864 to 1866, the First United Presbyterian Church of Braddock occupied a two-room schoolhouse on Eleventh Street. Elder Matthew Henning then donated a lot on the corner of Eleventh Street and the B & O Railroad, and the congregation occupied a building on that site beginning in 1867. The nature of this building is not precisely known. Real estate property maps of 1872 and 1886 show a masonry building of irregular plan on property owned by Mrs. M. Henning in the location given in historical documents, but no description of the church on Eleventh Street was recorded.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Rev. James V. Wright, "Churches." In George H. Lamb, ed. *Unwritten History of Braddock's Field*. Pittsburgh: Nicholson Printing Company, 1917. Electronic version: <http://www.ebooksread.com/authors-eng/braddock-pa-history-committee/the-unwritten-history-of-braddocks-field-pennsylvania-dar-468.shtml>. Accessed Feb. 20, 2018.

⁶ Ibid.

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After 25 years in this location, on April 16, 1893, the congregation dedicated the current building on Parker Avenue, built at a cost of \$39,000.⁷ Its architect was John L. Beatty, a graduate of the Western University of Pennsylvania (now University of Pittsburgh) who began practicing professionally in 1890. A “Book of Designs” he published at an unknown date provides a glimpse into an apparently successful career. It contains illustrations of Queen Anne and Romanesque style residences, a stone office building for the Uniondale Cemetery, a foundry and finishing shop for the Pittsburgh Brass Manufacturing Company (NRHP 2016), and another brick Richardsonian Romanesque church, the First Presbyterian Church of Duquesne (date of construction unknown; now demolished).⁸ Beatty went on to design West Penn Hospital, his most prominent commission, in 1909.

The Braddock church remained in use by the First United Presbyterian congregation until 2017. In a community which experienced sharp decline and deep disinvestment since the collapse of the steel industry in the 1970s and 80s, First United Presbyterian’s social and physical history have been remarkably stable.

Significance: Neo-Medieval Auditorium Church

The First United Presbyterian Church of Braddock is locally significant under Criterion C for Architecture. It is a skillfully-designed, strategically-located, high-integrity example of a building type, the neo-medieval auditorium church, which combined two simultaneous, distinctly American movements in religious architecture of the time: the Richardsonian Romanesque style and the Akron-auditorium plan. Together, these expressed the vitality and public relevance of the church through exterior architecture derived from historic precedents and interior spatial arrangements inspired by modern theaters. Recent ideas about organized, age-graded religious education were also built into the church’s plan. First United Presbyterian’s small scale and its site, among houses uphill from the business district and adjacent to the Carnegie Free Library of Braddock, reflected a view of the church as a religious “home” that was also part of the public life of Braddock. Its period of significance is 1893, the year of its construction.

Nineteenth Century Protestantism and the Richardsonian Romanesque Style in Braddock:

In Pittsburgh and surrounding communities, including Braddock, immigrants supported a rich culture of Protestantism. The Presbyterian denomination in Pennsylvania was strongly associated with families of Scottish origin who sought freedom from religious persecution in the United States. A list of elders of the First United Presbyterian Church of Braddock since 1864, published in a church centennial history of 1964, establishes the extent of the Scottish affiliation of the congregation’s most influential members, including a preponderance of Scottish names such as Stewart, Duff, Scott, Glasgow, Cameron, Gilmore, Shaw, Lindsay, and many more names beginning with “Mc.”⁹

With such deep roots in the Scottish community, the United Presbyterian denomination had special status in Braddock, a community built on the investments of Andrew Carnegie. By moving to Parker Avenue—then called Church Avenue—Braddock’s United Presbyterian congregation sought to build a house of worship commensurate with this status. Its new location literally elevated the church above the noise and pollution of the railroad tracks, bustling Braddock Avenue, and the steel mill, from which it had been located only one block west on the Henning lot. The *Braddock Tribune* described the location as “the

⁷ “One Hundredth Anniversary,” np.

⁸ John L. Beatty, “Book of Designs: J. L. Beatty, Architect, Pittsburgh, PA” (Pittsburgh: Duquesne Printing and Publishing Company, nd).

⁹ “One Hundredth Anniversary,” np.

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most delightful section of the town... one of the beauty spots in the architectural construction of the vicinity."¹⁰ First United Presbyterian's new neighbors included another established Protestant congregation, the First Methodist Episcopal Church, and the Carnegie Free Library of Braddock, the crown jewel of the community and a powerful symbol of its aspirations.

The choice to build in the Richardsonian Romanesque Style made a further statement about First United Presbyterian Church's affluence, social status, and connection to the borough's most prominent capitalist and benefactor, Andrew Carnegie. American architects had experimented with Romanesque influences since the 1840s and 50s, but it was Henry Hobson Richardson's interpretation of medieval Italian architecture in the 1870s and 80s that inspired the nomenclature and widespread admiration—and imitation—of the style. Though derived from European precedents, the Richardsonian Romanesque was considered an original American style through Richardson's updated and unified approach, tying his designs together with common forms and colors and harmonious rhythms.¹¹ The style is eclectic in expression, but characteristic features include asymmetrical massing; wide, round-topped or Syrian arches; squat piers or colonettes with ornately-carved cushion capitals; rusticated wall textures; deeply recessed window openings, emphasizing the massiveness of the solid masonry walls; towers; and frequently, prominent rooflines featuring multiple, intersecting gables and other forms.

Richardson's competition-winning design for Trinity Church (1872-1877) in Boston was highly influential. Locally, so was his Allegheny County Courthouse and Jail, which was being completed just up the Monongahela River from Braddock when Richardson died in 1886. Also under construction in 1886 was Richardson's red-brick Emmanuel Episcopal Church in Allegheny City (now the North Side of Pittsburgh). Economical by necessity, Emmanuel Episcopal took on a powerful, minimally ornamental form that presaged modern design. These buildings, and others by Richardson, inspired hundreds of imitations in the churches, libraries, train stations, city halls, courthouses, large private homes and even rowhouses built between about 1880 and 1895.

In southwestern Pennsylvania, Richardson's personal influence caused the Richardsonian Romanesque style to take hold with particular strength. The vigorous Richardsonian approach to design quickly replaced earlier, fussier styles such as the Second Empire and High Victorian Gothic.¹² The style appealed particularly to the wealthy, who used it for their homes and churches as well as for civic and commercial investments. In all cases, the style made a statement about power and permanence. Richardsonian Romanesque buildings were expensive due to their solid masonry construction (masonry veneering had not yet been perfected). Because of their expense and non-formulaic design, Richardsonian Romanesque buildings were almost always architect-designed.

In 1889, the Carnegie Free Library of Braddock, designed by William Halsey Wood of New Jersey, brought the style that made the Allegheny County Courthouse famous to Braddock. The library's addition, underway in 1893, was designed in the Richardsonian Romanesque style by Longfellow, Alden, and Harlow, successors to H. H. Richardson. Across Parker Avenue from the library, the First M. E. Church also engaged Longfellow, Alden, and Harlow to design its new house of worship in 1890. In building its own Richardsonian Romanesque church on Parker Avenue, the First United Presbyterian congregation made a strategic decision to associate itself with the library and another established

¹⁰ "Our Prettiest Church" (*Braddock Tribune*, April 1, 1893), 1.

¹¹ Jeffrey Howe, *Houses of Worship: An Identification Guide to the History and Styles of American Religious Architecture* (San Diego: Thunder Bay Press, 2003), 215.

¹² *Ibid.*

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Protestant congregation in an elite enclave of prestigious buildings in the most fashionable American style of the day.

That this grouping included a public library made the buildings' shared style all the more notable. Unlike the Gothic Revival traditionally used for Christian churches, the Richardsonian Romanesque provided a common architectural language with secular buildings. Jeanne Halgren Kilde, a scholar of American religious buildings of the late 19th century, writes that Richardsonian Romanesque churches mimicked public and commercial architecture, and in so doing, announced the new public role of evangelical religion. Adaptation of this essentially secular style for religious buildings promoted churches' integration with, rather than apartness from, the secular community.¹³ Use of the same style for houses and churches also supported the idea of late-19th century religious buildings as spiritual homes. The small scale of First United Presbyterian of Braddock allowed it to harmonize with the middle-class houses on Parker Avenue. Class messaging was another important inherent component of the Richardsonian Romanesque style. Kilde asserts that, "With their medieval references, suggestive of a feudalistic era easily romanticized as a period of class stability, [Richardsonian Romanesque] buildings pointed toward a benevolent ruling class." Such associations were important to urban congregations, such as First United Presbyterian, intent on attracting middle-class members in a competitive setting.¹⁴

The design of First United Presbyterian both harmonizes with its neighbors, the library and First M.E., and makes a separate statement from them. Unlike either the library or First M. E., First United Presbyterian is constructed of red brick. This may have been a matter of economy, as at Richardson's own Emmanuel Episcopal Church; the *Braddock Tribune* reported that the First United Presbyterian congregation was proud to occupy its new building almost free from debt.¹⁵ More expensive rusticated stone is used sparingly but judiciously to introduce contrasting color and texture in belt courses. Broad, muscular arches, embellished with decorative brickwork, emphasize the building's entrances and stained-glass windows, creating strongly-articulated portals between inside and out on a tight site that did not allow for projecting forms. The church's asymmetrical facade and complex roofline break up its blocky massing, creating a lively variety of heights, shapes, and depths. Windows and doorways are deeply recessed into the walls, underscoring their solid masonry construction. The style's medieval prototypes are recalled in the steep gables, lancet windows high on the walls, and squat arcade at the top of the west tower, while the slate roof is, like the red brick walls, another practical adaptation to readily-available local materials. With little overt ornamentation and with ordinary materials, the church achieves an engaging level of complexity through its composition of volumes, forms, and textures. The *Braddock Tribune* called First United Presbyterian "the finest house of worship in Braddock" when it was dedicated in 1893.¹⁶

The church's architect, John L. Beatty, had close personal ties to the United Presbyterian denomination. Beatty was a ruling elder of the Fourth United Presbyterian Church of Allegheny and a member of Board of Mission of the United Presbyterian Church of North America.¹⁷ The congregation's choice of Beatty suggests that an intimate understanding of the building's spiritual function was the most important consideration in its design. A catalogue of Beatty's work shows he was a versatile architect, competent in

¹³ Jeanne Halgren Kilde, *When Church Became Theatre: The Transformation of Evangelical Architecture and Worship in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 107.

¹⁴ Kilde, 107, 104.

¹⁵ "Our Prettiest Church," *ibid.*

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ "John L. Beatty, Architect, Dies at Home Here" (*Pittsburgh Press*, April 20, 1942), 6.

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several styles. It is reasonable to believe that he and his clients chose the Richardsonian Romanesque to fit both the church's architectural context and its religious program.

The Akron-Auditorium Plan:

On its interior, the First United Presbyterian Church of Braddock broke with traditional cruciform, longitudinal, center-aisle church plans to reflect a new style of worship hall and associated spaces favored by late-19th century Protestant congregations. First United Presbyterian's plan is a hybrid of two late-19th century Protestant trends: the auditorium-style sanctuary and the Akron plan for Sunday schools. This compound approach reflected simultaneous innovations in the design of American religious spaces after the Civil War.

First was the theater-style seating adopted by American Protestant denominations whose worship practices departed from established European traditions. Until the late 19th century, Protestant church design had mimicked the familiar configurations of Catholic, Lutheran, and Anglican churches, which placed an emphasis on ritual and the hierarchical separation between clergy and laity. Architecturally, such concepts were expressed by symmetrical, elongated or cruciform plans which provided a deep nave for the seating of the congregation; a chancel at the front of the church reserved for the clergy; a high altar against the rear wall; and an elevated pulpit from which the minister addressed the congregation.

In the post-Civil War United States, nonconformist Protestant churches—such as Presbyterian, Methodist, Baptist, and Congregational—held services that placed an emphasis on the spoken word. Charismatic preachers began to draw congregations too large for traditional sanctuaries. Longitudinal plans were limited in length, sight lines, and acoustics. Late 19th century Protestants sought spatial configurations which diminished the separation between clergy and laity and provided an optimal setting for preaching. This coincided with advances in acoustical science and led to the development of a square auditorium configuration which simultaneously increased seating and decreased the distance between individual worshippers and the pulpit. Auditorium plan churches typically had a wide, fan-shaped seating arrangement of concentric, curved pews and a floor which sloped downward toward a raised pulpit platform. Without traditional chancels and processional aisles, long, wide center aisles were not needed.¹⁸ The pulpit, not an altar, was the auditorium's focal point. Music, both as accompaniment to hymns and as performance, had also become a more important part of Protestant services. The new theater-style auditorium plans sought to accommodate this, too.

At around the same time, many congregations adopted a new approach to providing religious education in Sunday schools. Pioneered in Akron, Ohio, and so known as the Akron plan, this was an orderly yet flexible system in which classrooms were connected to a central lecture hall—sometimes termed a multi-purpose room, in keeping with the plan's modular nature—via sliding or folding partitions. This allowed the rooms to be combined for large functions or closed off for small-group studies tailored to different age groups.

Beginning in the 1880s, Akron plan Sunday school plans were frequently incorporated into the designs of auditorium-plan churches. In these cases the Sunday school lecture hall typically opened to the auditorium, allowing it also to serve as overflow seating space for the sanctuary. The term "Akron plan" is sometimes also used to refer to these hybrid Akron-auditorium churches.

¹⁸ Sawyers, Keith, in Wishart, David, ed. "Encyclopedia of the Great Plains: Religious Architecture." <http://plainshumanities.unl.edu/encyclopedia/doc/egp.arc.040>. Accessed August 29, 2018.

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The popularity of this plan facilitated a shift away from longitudinal footprints and symmetrical facades and toward an embrace of eclectic late-Victorian architectural styles, such as the medieval-inspired Richardsonian Romanesque, for Protestant churches. The appearance of an Akron plan church was distinctive and usually asymmetrical. The main entrance to the auditorium was typically through a tall corner tower, while a secondary entrance was marked by a shorter tower positioned between the auditorium and the Sunday school.¹⁹

All of these trends converged in the First United Presbyterian Church of Braddock. Its exterior is a fine example of the Richardsonian Romanesque style as adapted to a compact, but not modest, Akron-plan church. Its asymmetrical arrangement of towers and gables signifies the non-traditional arrangement of worship, instructional, social, and administrative spaces inside. First United Presbyterian's architecture also relates specifically to its site, adjacent to a powerful symbol of Braddock's public life and the largesse made possible by its industrial wealth. The congregation's decision to build next door to the library invoked considerable prestige and likely facilitated the gift of a pipe organ from Mr. and Mrs. Andrew Carnegie, who also placed one in the Braddock Library music hall the same year (1893).²⁰ Both organs are still in service.

On its interior, First United Presbyterian retains the plan described by the *Braddock Tribune* when the church opened in 1893. The paper's confident use of the word "auditorium" for the sanctuary shows that the concept of the auditorium-plan church required no explanation. However, the auditorium's combination with the Akron plan for related classroom space was treated as an innovation, suggesting that First United Presbyterian might have been the first church in the community to employ it: "The lecture room is at the side of the auditorium, and connected with it are good class rooms, all so arranged that when the rolling blinds between auditorium and lecture room are raised, an audience of almost 1000 people can be comfortably seated, and obtain a good view of the speaker."²¹ This was exactly the intention of the Akron plan.

Comparisons

The First United Presbyterian Church is unique in Braddock in plan and design. The most meaningful comparisons are the other church buildings nearest to it, both in proximity and denomination. The First Methodist Episcopal Church of Braddock and the First Presbyterian Church of Braddock not only stand within sight of First United Presbyterian, completing the cluster of Protestant churches around the intersection of Library Street and Parker Avenue, but are the closest in their dates of establishment and construction in Braddock.

The First M. E. congregation was the second-oldest in Braddock, founded in 1855. Similar to First United Presbyterian, it met in schoolhouses and other ad-hoc locations until it dedicated its building at Library Street and Parker Avenue in 1890. Together with the library and First United Presbyterian, First M.E. rounds out a variety of expressions of Romanesque design added to Library Street and Parker Avenue between 1889 and 1893. In *Architecture After Richardson*, her study of Longfellow, Alden, and Harlow, Margaret Henderson Floyd refers to First M.E. as a "lower-budget design that is fundamentally Italian in style" rather than being a free interpretation of Romanesque precedents.²² First M.E. is executed entirely

¹⁹ Sawyers, Keith, *ibid.*

²⁰ "One Hundredth Anniversary," *ibid.*

²¹ "Our Prettiest Church," *ibid.*

²² Margaret Henderson Floyd, *Architecture After Richardson: Regionalism Before Modernism—Longfellow, Alden, and Harlow in Boston and Pittsburgh* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 138.

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in buff brick with a projecting archivolt and belt course its only applied exterior ornament. In plan, First M.E. was designed with an auditorium-style worship hall, but its Sunday school facility was located in a rear wing, separated from the auditorium by the pulpit and alcove. This back-to-back plan was a more rudimentary expression of the Akron-auditorium combination, as it did not allow for the flexibility of the adjacent lecture room which could be opened or closed to the sanctuary and connected classrooms.

The First M.E. Church of Braddock merged with another congregation in 1987, then again in 1990.²³ The building closed in 1990 and has been vacant since, resulting in loss of some historic fabric, notably windows, to the detriment of its integrity. Its entrance porch, tower, and one-story extension have also been altered. Access to this church to assess its interior integrity was not possible.

The First Presbyterian Church of Braddock formed in 1872 and constructed its building on Library Street between 1896 and 1901. (In the history of Presbyterianism, various denominations have arisen, merged, and split; the Presbyterian Church and the United Presbyterian Church were distinct denominations until 1983.²⁴) Larger than either the First United Presbyterian or the First M.E. churches, it features a conventional, symmetrical, late Gothic Revival center-aisle design in orange brick and stone. The date of First Presbyterian's closure is not known, but its congregation may have been absorbed into that of First United Presbyterian when the denominations merged in 1983. In 2010, First Presbyterian was remodeled as a community center.

²³ "Pittsburgh District" Historical Church Records of the Western Pennsylvania Conference of the United Methodist Church, ND, 656.
https://www.wpaumc.org/files/resource/historical_records/pittsburgh+district+church+records.pdf. Accessed Feb. 21, 2018.

²⁴ "History of the Church," Presbyterian Historical Society, <https://www.history.pcusa.org/history-online/presbyterian-history/history-church>. Accessed Feb. 21, 2018.

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9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

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https://www.wpaumc.org/files/resource/historical_records/pittsburgh+district+church+records.pdf

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<https://collection1.libraries.psu.edu/cdm/search/collection/maps1/searchterm/Braddock%20pa>

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Wright, Rev. James V. "Churches." In Lamb, George H., ed. *Unwritten History of Braddock's Field*. Pittsburgh: Nicholson Printing Company, 1917. Electronic version: <http://www.ebooksread.com/authors-eng/braddock-pa-history-committee/the-unwritten-history-of-braddocks-field-pennsylvania-dar-468.shtml>

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- 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 # _____
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository: Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

First United Presbyterian Church of Braddock
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10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property <1

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

- | | |
|------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Latitude: 40.402245 | Longitude: -79.865688 |
| 2. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 3. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 4. Latitude: | Longitude: |

Or

UTM References

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

NAD 1927 or NAD 1983

- | | | |
|----------|-----------|-----------|
| 1. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 2. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 3. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 4. Zone: | Easting : | Northing: |

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The First United Presbyterian Church of Braddock consists of the property designated as Allegheny County block and lot number 302-A-235.

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Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundary corresponds with that of the legal property which has been associated with the First United Presbyterian Church of Braddock since its construction in 1893.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Angelique Bamberg, Principal
organization: Clio Consulting
street & number: 233 Amber Street
city or town: Pittsburgh state: PA zip code: 15206
e-mail clioconsulting@me.com
telephone: 412-956-5517
date: November 16, 2018

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

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Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log

Name of Property: First United Presbyterian Church of Braddock

City or Vicinity: Braddock

County: Allegheny

State: PA

Photographer: Angelique Bamberg

Date Photographed: February 16, 2018

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

Photo 1 (PA_AlleghenyCounty_FirstUnitedPresbyterianChurchofBraddock_0001)
First United Presbyterian Church of Braddock, primary and west side facades, camera facing SE

Photo 2 (PA_AlleghenyCounty_FirstUnitedPresbyterianChurchofBraddock_0002)
First United Presbyterian Church of Braddock, primary facade, camera facing west

Photo 3 (PA_AlleghenyCounty_FirstUnitedPresbyterianChurchofBraddock_0003)
Parker Ave., view to Library St. camera facing SE

Photo 4 (PA_AlleghenyCounty_FirstUnitedPresbyterianChurchofBraddock_0004)
Parker Ave., Carnegie Library of Braddock in foreground, camera facing NW

Photo 5 (PA_AlleghenyCounty_FirstUnitedPresbyterianChurchofBraddock_0005)
Former Braddock Post Office at corner of Parker Ave. and Orchard St., camera facing north

Photo 6 (PA_AlleghenyCounty_FirstUnitedPresbyterianChurchofBraddock_0006)
Primary facade, camera facing south

Photo 7 (PA_AlleghenyCounty_FirstUnitedPresbyterianChurchofBraddock_0007)
West side facade, camera facing SE

Photo 8 (PA_AlleghenyCounty_FirstUnitedPresbyterianChurchofBraddock_0008)

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Rear (south) facade from Maple Way, camera facing NE

Photo 9 (PA_AlleghenyCounty_FirstUnitedPresbyterianChurchofBraddock_0009)
East side facade, camera facing SW

Photo 10 (PA_AlleghenyCounty_FirstUnitedPresbyterianChurchofBraddock_0010)
Basement, camera facing west

Photo 11 (PA_AlleghenyCounty_FirstUnitedPresbyterianChurchofBraddock_0011)
West vestibule and staircase to basement, camera facing north

Photo 12 (PA_AlleghenyCounty_FirstUnitedPresbyterianChurchofBraddock_0012)
East vestibule, camera facing east

Photo 13 (PA_AlleghenyCounty_FirstUnitedPresbyterianChurchofBraddock_0013)
Auditorium, camera facing south

Photo 14 (PA_AlleghenyCounty_FirstUnitedPresbyterianChurchofBraddock_0014)
Auditorium, camera facing NE

Photo 15 (PA_AlleghenyCounty_FirstUnitedPresbyterianChurchofBraddock_0015)
Auditorium, camera facing west

Photo 16 (PA_AlleghenyCounty_FirstUnitedPresbyterianChurchofBraddock_0016)
Lecture Room, camera facing north

Photo 17 (PA_AlleghenyCounty_FirstUnitedPresbyterianChurchofBraddock_0017)
Former opening to Lecture Room from south classroom, camera facing NE

Photo 18 (PA_AlleghenyCounty_FirstUnitedPresbyterianChurchofBraddock_0018)
Parlor, camera facing east

Photo 19 (PA_AlleghenyCounty_FirstUnitedPresbyterianChurchofBraddock_0019)
Office, camera facing west

Photo 20 (PA_AlleghenyCounty_FirstUnitedPresbyterianChurchofBraddock_0020)
Balcony, camera facing NW

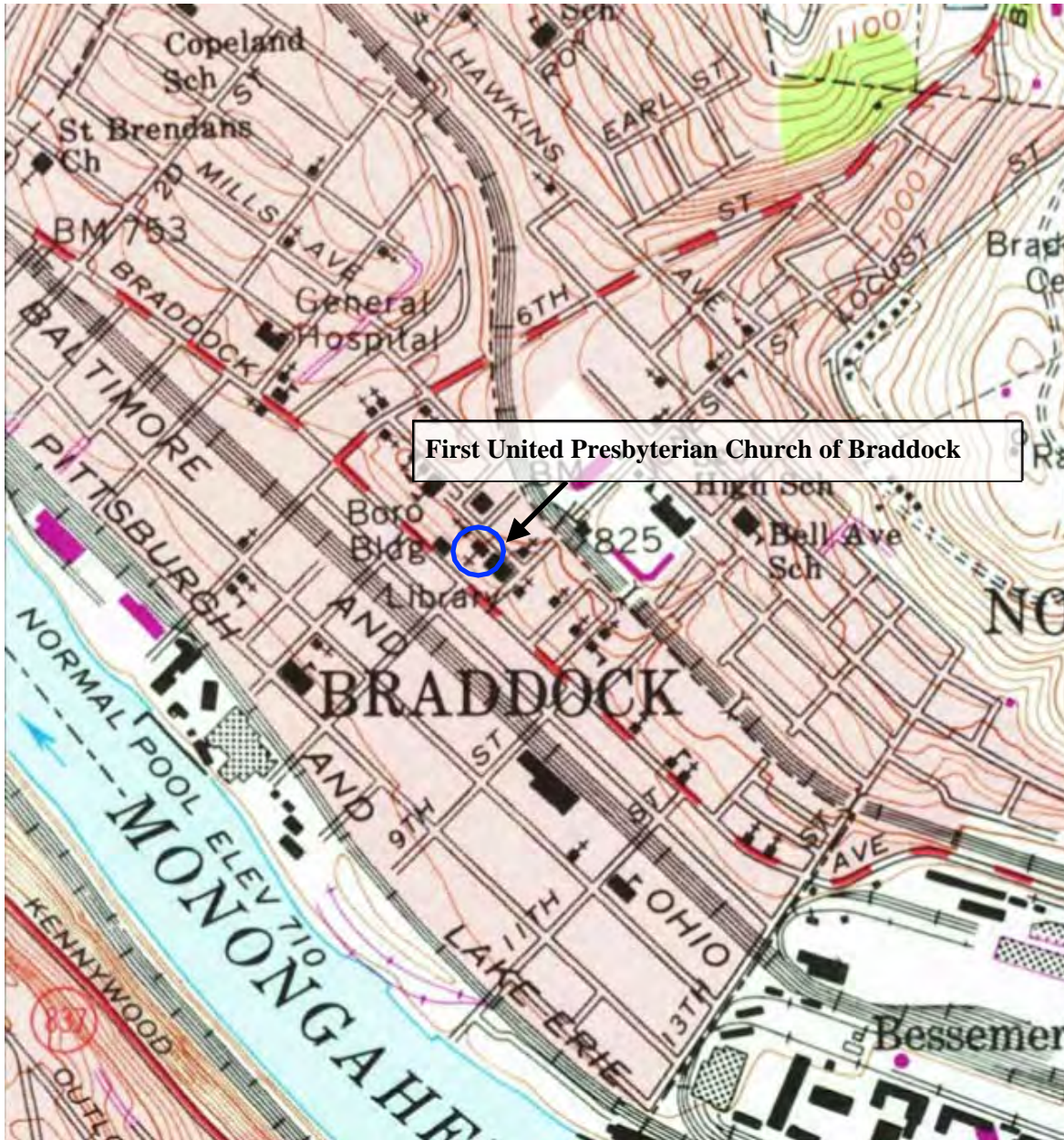
Photo 21 (PA_AlleghenyCounty_FirstUnitedPresbyterianChurchofBraddock_0021)
Mezzanine east room, camera facing north

Photo 22 (PA_AlleghenyCounty_FirstUnitedPresbyterianChurchofBraddock_0022)
Mezzanine, west room, camera facing east

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First United Presbyterian Church of Braddock
Allegheny County, PA

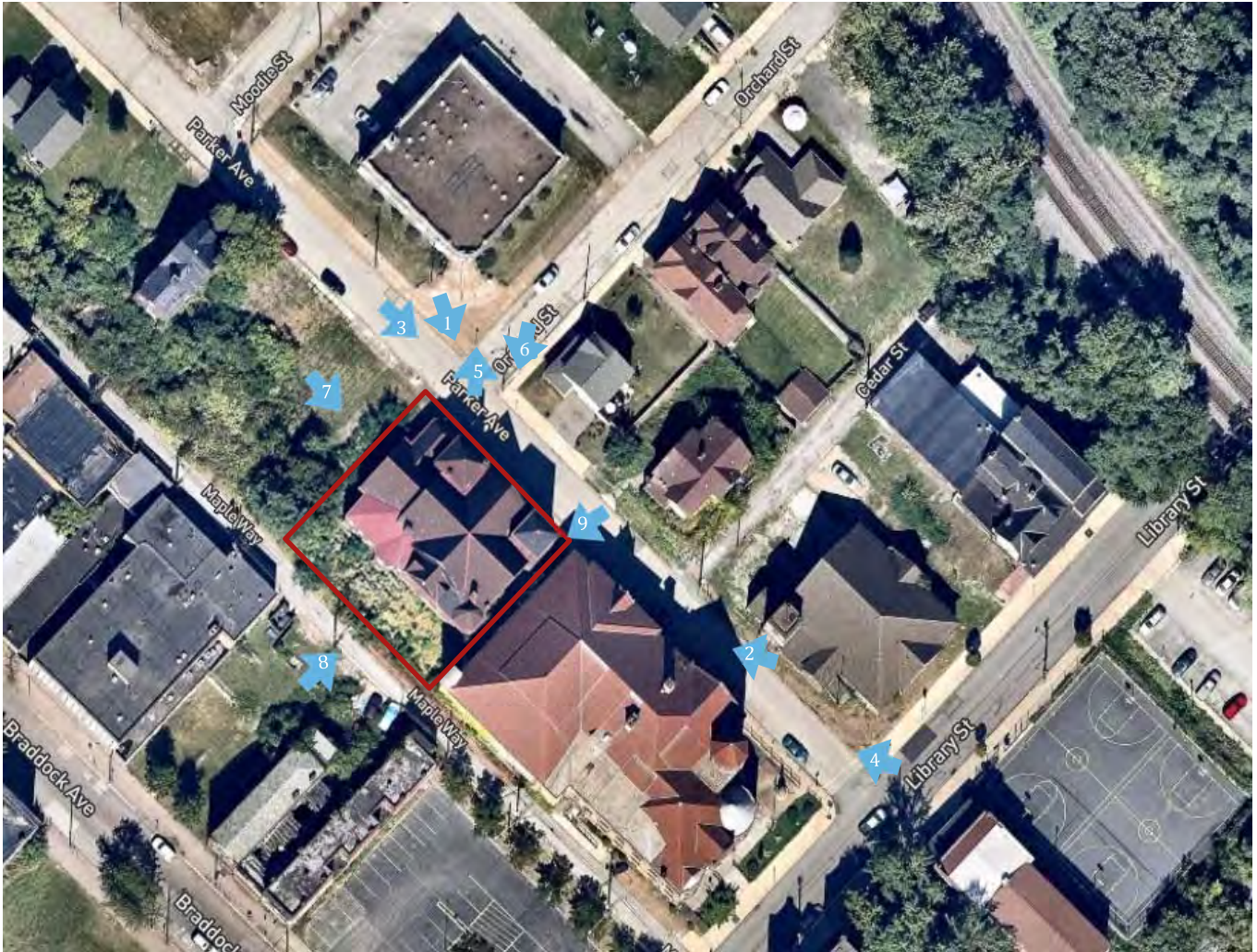


Location Map

Excerpt: USGS Braddock, Allegheny County, PA

First United Presbyterian Church of Braddock
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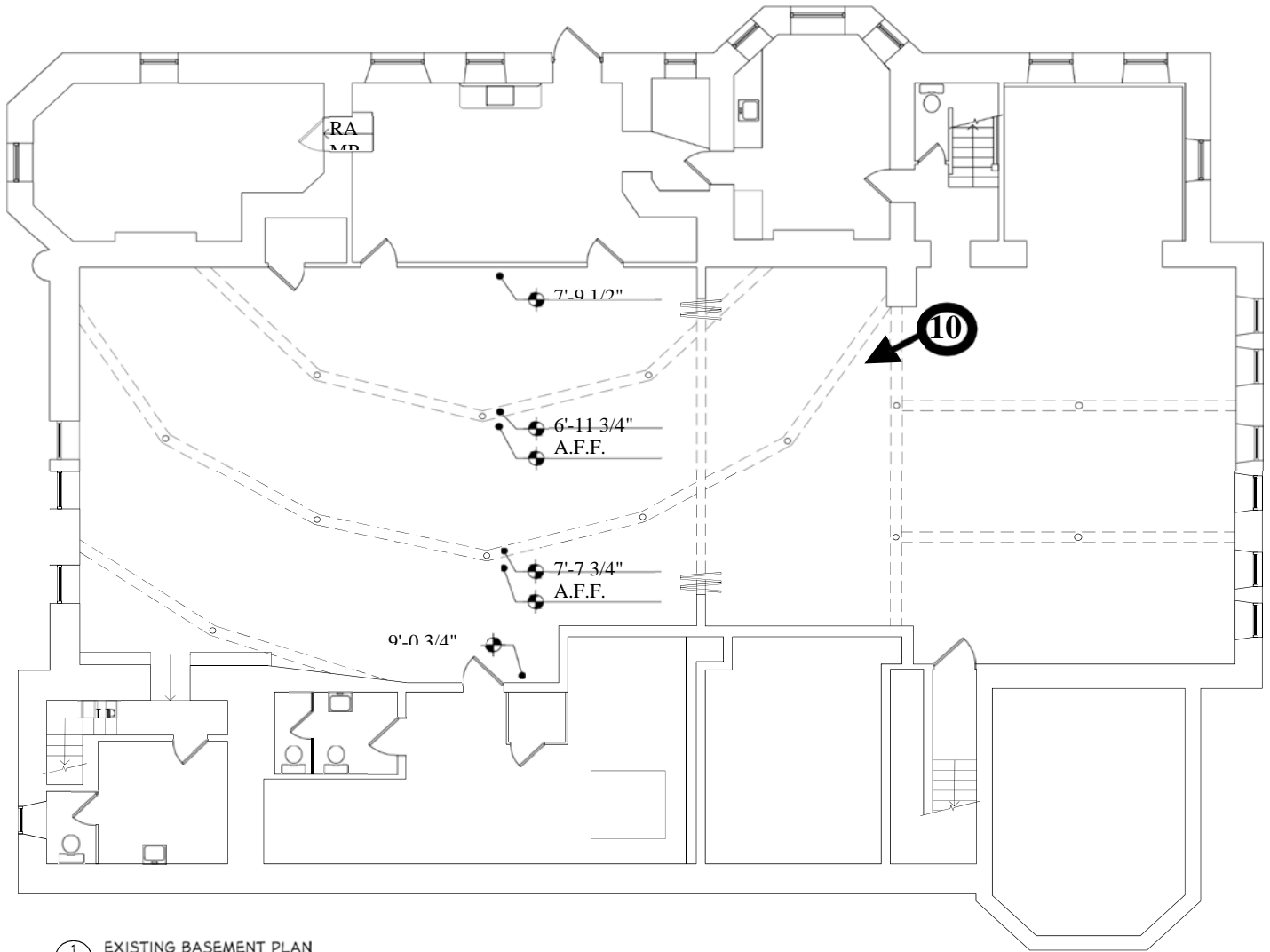


Site Plan
keyed to exterior photo locations

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Photo Key Plan – BASEMENT

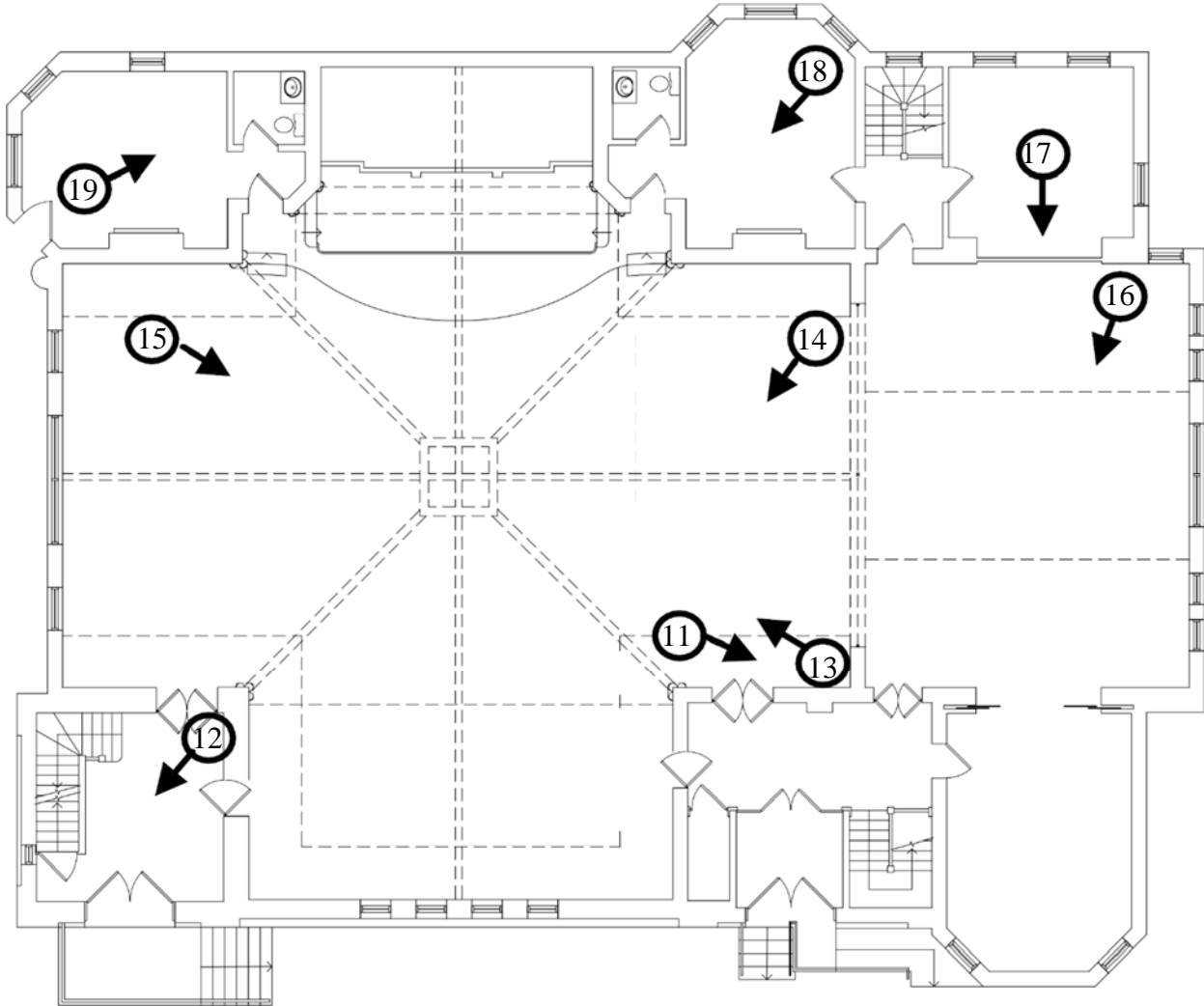


1 EXISTING BASEMENT PLAN
A1 SCALE: 3/16" = 1'-0"

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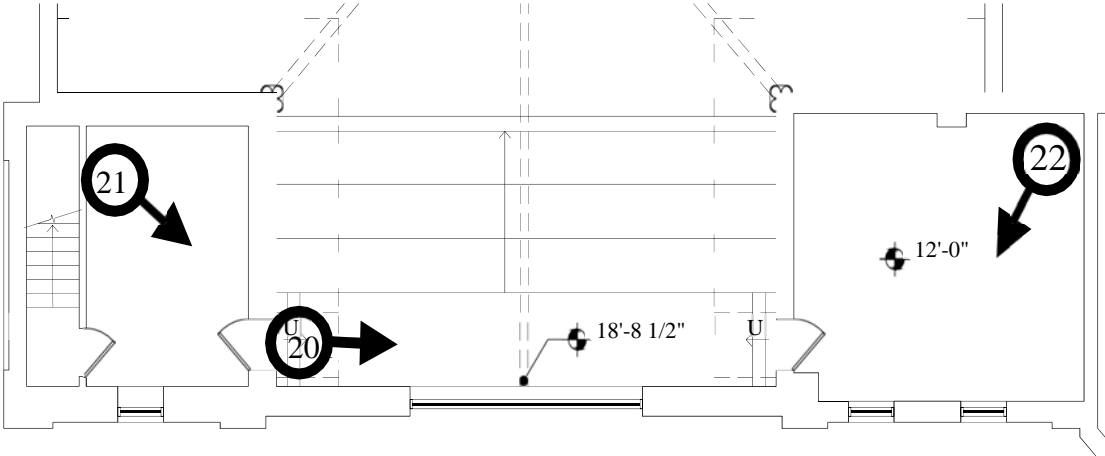
Photo Key Plan – FIRST FLOOR



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Photo Key Plan – MEZZANINE



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Photo 1. First United Presbyterian Church of Braddock, primary and west side facades



Photo 2. View to west

First United Presbyterian Church of Braddock
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Photo 3. Parker Avenue, view east to Library Street



Photo 4. Parker Avenue, Carnegie Library of Braddock in foreground

First United Presbyterian Church of Braddock
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Photo 5. Former Braddock Post Office at corner of Parker Avenue and Orchard Street



Photo 6. Primary (NE) facade

First United Presbyterian Church of Braddock
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Photo 7. West side facade



Photo 8. Rear (south) facade from Maple Way

First United Presbyterian Church of Braddock
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Photo 9. East side facade

First United Presbyterian Church of Braddock
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Photo 10. Basement



Photo 11. West vestibule, staircase to basement, and doorway to classroom

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Photo 12. East vestibule



Photo 13. Auditorium: view south to pulpit and pipe organ
Section 9-end page 36

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Photo 14. Auditorium: view northeast to balcony face



Photo 15. Auditorium: view west toward lecture room

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Photo 16. Lecture room, view to north classroom



Photo 17. South classroom showing closed portal to lecture room

First United Presbyterian Church of Braddock
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Photo 18. Parlor



Photo 19. Office

First United Presbyterian Church of Braddock
Name of Property

Allegheny County, PA
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Photo 20. Balcony

First United Presbyterian Church of Braddock
Name of Property

Allegheny County, PA
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Photo 21. Mezzanine, east room

First United Presbyterian Church of Braddock
Name of Property

Allegheny County, PA
County and State



Photo 22. Mezzanine, west room

First United Presbyterian Church of Braddock
Name of Property

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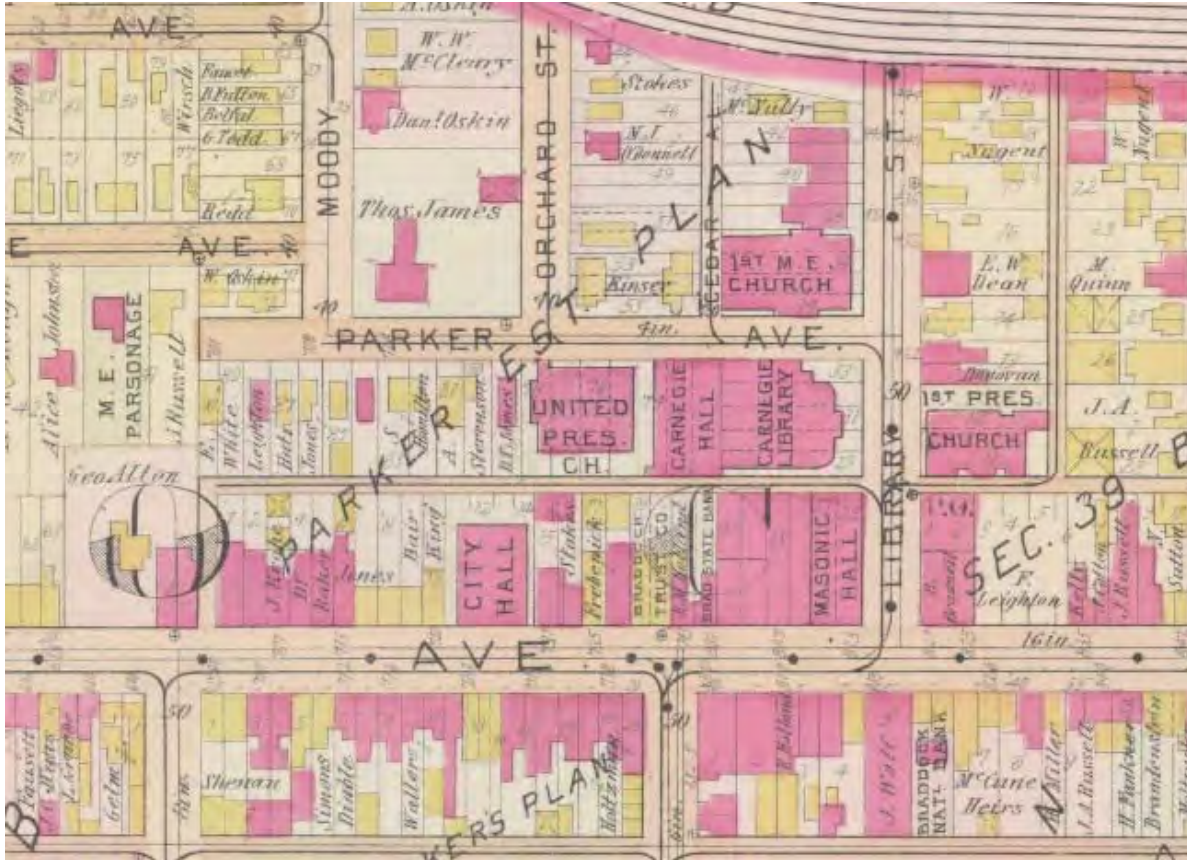


Figure 1. Excerpt, Hopkins Plat Map of the Eastern Vicinity of Pittsburgh, 1903 First United Presbyterian Church of Braddock at center

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Figure 2. Woman and children of First United Presbyterian congregation in front of church's NW entrance, ca. 1905

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Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.







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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

Requested Action: Nomination

Property Name: First United Presbyterian Church of Braddock

Multiple Name:

State & County: PENNSYLVANIA, Allegheny

Date Received: 11/14/2019 Date of Pending List: 12/12/2019 Date of 16th Day: 12/27/2019 Date of 45th Day: 12/30/2019 Date of Weekly List:

Reference number: SG100004810

Nominator: SHPO

Reason For Review:

- | | | |
|---------------------------------------|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Appeal | <input type="checkbox"/> PDIL | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Text/Data Issue |
| <input type="checkbox"/> SHPO Request | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape | <input type="checkbox"/> Photo |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Waiver | <input type="checkbox"/> National | <input type="checkbox"/> Map/Boundary |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Resubmission | <input type="checkbox"/> Mobile Resource | <input type="checkbox"/> Period |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other | <input type="checkbox"/> TCP | <input type="checkbox"/> Less than 50 years |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> CLG | |

Accept Return Reject 12/30/2019 Date

Abstract/Summary NR Criterion C.
Comments:

Recommendation/ Criteria AOS: Architecture; POS: 1893; LOS: local. Architect John Beatty.

Reviewer Lisa Deline

Discipline Historian

Telephone (202)354-2239

Date 12/30/19

DOCUMENTATION: see attached comments : No see attached SLR : No

If a nomination is returned to the nomination authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the National Park Service.



Pennsylvania State Historic Preservation Office

PENNSYLVANIA HISTORICAL AND MUSEUM COMMISSION



October 30, 2019

Joy Beasley, Keeper
National Register of Historic Places
National Park service, US Department of Interior
1849 C Street, NW, Mail Stop 7228
Washington, DC 20240

RE: First United Presbyterian Church of Braddock, Allegheny County, PA

Dear Ms. Beasley:

Enclosed please find the National Register of Historic Places nomination for the above named property. Included is the signed first page of the nomination, CDs containing the true and correct copy of the nomination and tif images, and a letter of support.

The proposed action for this property is listing. Our Board also supports this nomination.

If you have any questions regarding the nomination or our request for action, please contact me at 717-705-4035 or erairigh@pa.gov. Thank you for your consideration of this submission.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Rairigh, Chief
Preservation Services Division

enclosure