

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form

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NAT. REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an 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. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name First Presbyterian Church and Cemetery

other name/site number \_\_\_\_\_

2. Location

street & town 600 Rahway Avenue  not for publication

city or town Township of Woodbridge  vicinity

state New Jersey code NJ county Middlesex code 023 zip code 07095

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  nationally  statewide  locally. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)  
*Amy Cradic* 1/25/08  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date  
Amy Cradic, Assistant Commissioner Natural & Historic Resources/D SHPO  
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date  
\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the 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 of the Keeper

Date of Action

*Patrick Andrews* 5/2/2008  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

First Presbyterian Church and Cemetery  
Name of Property

Woodbridge, Middlesex County, New Jersey  
City, County and State

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**

(check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

**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	
1	1	buildings
1		sites
	1	structures
		objects
2	2	Total

**Name of related multiple property listing**

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

N/A

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

0

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Function**

(Enter categories from instructions)

RELIGION/Religious Facility, Church School

FUNERARY/Cemetery

**Current Function**

(Enter categories from instructions)

RELIGION/Religious Facility, Church School

FUNERARY/Cemetery

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**

(Enter categories from instructions)

MID-19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY/Greek Revival

Gothic revival inside, neoclassical exterior now

**Materials**

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation STONE

walls BRICK

roof ASPHALT

other

**Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 7

First Presbyterian Church and Cemetery  
Name of Property

Woodbridge, Middlesex County, New Jersey  
City, County and State

## 8. Description

### 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.)

Property is:

- 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 of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

### Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

### Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

### 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 # \_\_\_\_\_

### Areas of Significance

(enter categories from instructions)

RELIGION \_\_\_\_\_

POLITICS/GOVERNMENT \_\_\_\_\_

ART \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

### Period of Significance

ca. 1675-1875 \_\_\_\_\_

### Significant Dates

1675, 1690, 1803, 1875 \_\_\_\_\_

### Significant Persons

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

### Cultural Affiliation

### Architect/Builder

Jonathan Freeman (architect and builder) \_\_\_\_\_

See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 8

### Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 9

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## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 5.24 acres

### UTM References

(Place additional boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

1 18 561518 4490407  
Zone Easting Northing

2 / / / / / / / / / / /  
Zone Easting Northing

3 / / / / / / / / / / /  
Zone Easting Northing

4 / / / / / / / / / / /  
Zone Easting Northing

### Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property.)

See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 10

Property Tax No. Block 564, Lot 1

### Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 10

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Nancy L. Zerbe, Angela Materna, Tyreen Reuter  
organization ARCH<sup>2</sup>, Inc. date August, 2007  
street & number 16 Wernik Place telephone 732-906-8203  
city or town Metuchen state NJ zip code 08840-2422

## Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

### Continuation Sheets

**Maps** A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

**Photographs:** Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

**Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

## Property Owner

name/title First Presbyterian Church of Woodbridge  
street & number 600 Rahway Avenue telephone 732-634-1024  
city or town Township of Woodbridge state NJ zip code 07095

**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. 470 *et seq.*).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 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 Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

First Presbyterian Church and  
Cemetery, Woodbridge,  
Middlesex County, New Jersey

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### PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

The First Presbyterian Church of Woodbridge (see Photograph #1), located at 600 Rahway Avenue in Woodbridge, New Jersey, sits on a large lot and is comprised of an older cemetery with approximately 3,000 burials and several 18<sup>th</sup> century stones, the main church building, a modern brick Fellowship Hall, a small cement block storage building, and a parking lot. The church, a frame building clad in a white brick veneer, consists of a main rectangular block and a rear two-story addition. The main block of the church and the steeple were constructed in 1803 on the site of an earlier meetinghouse in approximately the same location. A rear addition was added to the church in 1869, and in 1875 the main block was extensively remodeled and windows were added to its north and south facades. In 1972, the 1869 addition was replaced by the current rear addition, the windows were replaced, and the exterior of the church was renovated. The 1972 renovations also included the brick veneer cladding and the addition of several Neoclassical decorative elements, including the pedimented portico supported by paired Ionic columns. Although the 1875 and 1972 modifications to the church have altered its exterior ornamentation and features, its main block retains its basic original form. On the interior, the detailing from the 1875 renovations remains relatively intact.

### SETTING

The First Presbyterian Church and Cemetery is located along the east side of a heavily traveled road through a commercial and residential neighborhood of Woodbridge. Its 5.24-acre lot (Lot 1, Block 564) is triangular in shape and bounded by Rahway Avenue to the west, Trinity Lane to the north, and Port Reading Avenue to the south and east. The Register-listed Trinity Episcopal Church and its rectory and associated graveyard are located immediately to the north across Trinity Lane.

### CEMETERY

The cemetery, located immediately east of the church buildings and parking lot, sits on the majority of the sloping, landscaped 5-acre site (see Photograph #2). A narrow access road leads from the parking lot, through the cemetery, and terminates at Port Reading Avenue.

The markers range in date from the late 17<sup>th</sup> century to the present day in a variety of materials, shapes, types, and styles (see Photograph #9). The majority of the markers consist of sandstone, marble, slate, or granite and are in the form of upright slabs (stelae), footstones, tablets, and pedestals or obelisks on stepped or chamfered bases. The stelae, with or without plinths, exist in a variety of shapes, including rectangular, cambered, semi-circular without shoulders, and semi-circular with peaked, rounded, or flat shoulders. According to church records and reports, there are approximately 3,000 total burials in the cemetery.

The earliest legible marker is a fieldstone dated 1690, but the older stones in the cemetery otherwise date from the 18<sup>th</sup> century. These are primarily of brownstone and feature Puritan funerary art designs such as the winged soul, death's head, skull & crossbones, and tree of life (see Photographs #10 through #13).

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Many of these are found in their original groupings (see Photograph #14), and some stones still retain the signature of the carver (see Photographs #15 and #16). There are also several 18<sup>th</sup>-century slate stones (see Photograph #17), 19<sup>th</sup>-century limestone markers (see Photograph #18), and early 20<sup>th</sup>-century Terra Cotta markers (see Photograph #19). The eastern end of the cemetery, which still has active plots, contains numerous twentieth century graves with granite stones.

In addition to the original stones in the cemetery, there are several cenotaphs and commemorative markers that have been erected in the place of deteriorated original stones.

#### CHURCH EXTERIOR

##### *West Façade*

The main entry, a two-story pedimented portico approached by stone stairs with white metal railings, is located on the church's west façade (see Photograph #3). The portico is supported by paired Ionic columns, and leads to the recessed double-doors with a Classical door surround. Narrow four-over-four light double-hung windows and single Ionic pilasters flank the doorway. The second story has a large twelve-over-eighteen light window with sidelights. A pendant light hangs in the center. The pediment has a Federal style, nine-light, elliptical window with four keystone shapes placed tangentially to the oval. Below the window are two intersecting gilded branches in relief. The face of the tympanum is clad in vertical siding. A ramp providing ADA access to the main entrance is situated around the northeast corner of the church.

##### *North Elevation*

There are four bays of windows on the north side of the building (see Photograph #4). The first story windows have twelve-over-twelve lights. The second story has round-arch windows with ten-over-twelve lights. Each vertical bay of windows is set within an ornamental brick arch. At the rear corner of the north elevation, a brick veneered chimney rises up above the roofline.

##### *South Elevation*

The south elevation (see Photograph #5), symmetrical with the north elevation, consists of four bays with double-hung twelve-over-twelve windows on the first floor and arched double-hung ten-over-ten windows on the second floor.

##### *Addition*

The educational annex, constructed in 1972, extends eastward from the rear of the church. The addition is rectangular in plan with square projections on the north and south sides that house the stairwells. The roof of the addition is flat and the façade is covered with the same white brick veneer as the main church building. The east (rear) façade has five bays of eight-over-twelve light windows (see Photograph #6).

The north side of the annex has two bays of eight-over-twelve light windows and ducts for HVAC systems are cut into the wall between the two bays. The north stairwell has a window on the second floor, above an entrance on the first floor. On the west side of the north stairwell projection is another door with

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a chamfered porch set into the corner created by the intersection of the stairwell and the original building. This door serves as the side entrance to the church. Both doors are green painted metal doors and have a rectangular window with lights arranged in the shape of a Latin cross.

The south side of the annex is similar to the north side, although the fenestration differs: each floor has two windows, but they are not vertically aligned into regular bays. Similar to the north side of the addition, there is a window and door on the outer (south) side of the stairwell projection. This green painted metal door has five small panes of glass organized into the shape of a cross.

*Steeple*

The steeple is set on a square cupola (bell tower) with an asphalt shingled hip roof and overhanging eaves. The cupola is placed back slightly from the main entrance portico and centered on the gable of the main body of the church (see Photograph #7). Each side of the cupola is clad with horizontal siding and has rectangular vents with decoratively carved louvers. An octagonal drum rises out of the center of the cupola, and has alternating louvered vent panels on the four sides (corresponding to the cupola). The drum's fascia is clad in vertical wood siding. A six-sided spire, consisting of panels, vertical wood siding, and wood shingles, sits atop the octagonal drum. All surfaces of the steeple are painted white, including the roofing material. A large, gilded cross is placed at the apex of the spire.

**CHURCH INTERIOR**

Although little documentation exists as to the specific changes and additions made to the interior of the church during the 1875 renovation, stylistically it appears that the nave's Gothic Revival ornamentation dates from this time. Limited information available in the church records indicate that prior to this renovation, the interior was monochromatic with Classical Revival decorative elements.

*Ground Floor*

The front double doors lead into a narrow narthex that runs nearly the width of the west end of the church. The narthex contains open closets at each end, and two drum-shaped brass and glass lighting fixtures. A set of double doors leads from the narthex into the nave.

*Sanctuary*

The sanctuary of the church is rectangular in plan with a center aisle flanked by two side aisles (see Photograph #20). The ceiling is barrel-vaulted with a centered tiered circular brass and glass chandelier. The east wall contains the organ pipes supported by an arched arcade inscribed with curling gilded vines with leaves and berries. The northernmost panel in the arcade contains a single door. In front of the wooden arcade is a small rectangular raised platform area that contains the organ and seating for the choir. This raised area is enclosed by a half-height wood railing with inset panels. The organ, which was installed in 1875 as part of the renovations and 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the church, is a Moller Pipe Organ. Motorized elements were added ca. 1900 and 1925, and the entire organ was temporarily removed and stored during the 1971-1972 renovations.

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Immediately in front of the enclosed area are the pulpit and altar, located in front of the center aisle. The wood pews extend outward from this area in arch-shaped rows divided by the open center aisle. The aisles of the sanctuary are carpeted, while the floor among the pews is linoleum (see Photograph #21).

Set among the pews, slender Doric-inspired columns with ornamental stained wood brackets support an upper gallery that runs along the north, west, and south sides of the church (see Photograph #22). Each side of the sanctuary contains four columns and a square pilaster at the east wall. The west part of the gallery has two square columns in the center that are in front of large steel supports that were added in 1972 for the steeple. The brackets on the second story are slightly larger than those on the first and feature a carved quatrefoil design. Above the second-story brackets is a dark molding course that runs along every wall in the nave. Pilasters with brass lighting sconces are on the walls of the sanctuary behind each column. The pilasters divide the wall into five sections: the windows in the two western sections are offset just to the west of the pilasters, the center section does not have a window, and the two eastern sections have the window positioned just to the east of the pilasters.

Wooden staircases at the western corners of the sanctuary lead to the gallery turn and east at a landing as they ascend. At the foot of each stair is a carved newel post. The gallery has two rows of pews on the north and south sides and three rows of pews on the west side. The pews are at varying heights with the pews in front being at a lower level than those in the back. As a result, there are several steps in each part of the gallery. The floor is covered in wall-to-wall red carpeting and there is wood paneling up to a chair rail on each side. Baseboard heating units run along the walls of the gallery. The wood balustrade has turned posts. Painted steel cables run between the columns above the low balustrade as a safety precaution.

Two doors lead from the gallery to the History Room. This room is located above the narthex and also runs nearly the width of the church. It currently houses artifacts and items relating to the history of the Woodbridge congregation. In the center of its west wall is a large multi-pane window with side lights. A small metal ladder leads to a trap door in the ceiling in order to access the inside of the steeple. Two lighting fixtures, similar to those in the narthex, hang from the ceiling.

### *Basement*

The basement under the main block of the church has a concrete floor poured in 1972, as part of the renovations and addition to the rear of the church. The original rubble foundation from the church's 1803 construction still exists around the perimeter above the concrete. The floor of the basement was recessed several feet in 1972 and concrete had to be built up to the level of the old rubble foundation. This concrete projects into the basement slightly and retains the impressions of wood formwork. The basement houses a food pantry and mechanical equipment such as a hot water heater and furnace. A brick safe is built into the basement on the south side. Original structural supports for the steeple can also be seen in the center of the basement (see Photograph #23).



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### *Addition*

The large, two-story addition was constructed adjacent to the rear of the main block of the church in 1972. Doors on the east wall of the sanctuary at the first and second stories lead to this addition, which contains rooms at the basement level as well. The plan of the addition is essentially the same on each of its three floors: a hallway that runs the width of the church and rooms that extend east from the hallway. The walls are concrete block or sheetrock and the floors are covered in linoleum tile. The drop ceilings are acoustic tile with fluorescent lighting. The basement level contains five rectangular rooms: one classroom and four storage rooms. The ground floor contains a large wood-paneled Reading Room (see Photograph #24), the minister's and secretary's offices, a photocopying room, and men's and women's restrooms. The second story of the addition has three recessed entrances, providing access to four rooms: two classrooms, a choir room, and a lounge (see Photograph #25). On both the north and south ends of the hallway, stairwells connect the three stories and have exits on the ground floor.

### FELLOWSHIP HALL

A large modern building, Fellowship Hall (non-contributing), was constructed in 1956 along Rahway Avenue, north of the church and west of the cemetery (see Photograph #8). This one-story, red brick veneered, asphalt roofed, Neocolonial building consists of three sections: a five-bay main block, a six-bay dependency (or wing), and a narrow, flat roofed addition that extends across the entire length of the rear. The main block, which contains a small auditorium and stage, has segmental arch replacement nine-over-nine windows with white trim and a flush cornice with returns. The north end of the main block has two bays and a white cross centered in the upper gable end. An entrance at this end is situated at the northeast corner of the block, where the one-bay wide addition meets the building. The south gable end, ornamented at the attic story with a rounded window, has one window and connects with the dependency.

The dependency's western (main) façade contains a double door entrance with a sheet glass surround at its juncture with the main block. The windows on this façade consist of single six-over-six replacement windows flanking three paired six-over-six replacement windows. The south end of the dependency has a set of paired six-over-six replacement windows, a set of vents at the gable's apex, and a recessed entrance at its juncture with the rear addition. This section of the building houses an entrance lobby and a Sunday school classroom.

The rear addition, which houses a kitchen, a hall running the length of the building, and several small rooms, has paired six-over-six replacement windows on the north and south ends, and an entrance and several irregularly placed windows along the length of the rear (eastern) façade.

A large asphalt parking lot is located immediately north of Fellowship Hall, and a small modern cement block garage/utilitarian outbuilding sits at the north end of the parking lot, adjacent to a driveway leading into the cemetery.

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Cemetery, Woodbridge,  
Middlesex County, New Jersey**STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

The First Presbyterian Church and Cemetery in the Township of Woodbridge, Middlesex County, New Jersey, are eligible for listing in the National Register under Criterion A for their association with the development of the Woodbridge area and the eighteenth century struggle between the developing protestant sects of Presbyterianism and Anglicanism. In addition, the cemetery is eligible under Criterion C for the area of art for its eighteenth century gravestones in the Puritan funerary art design.

The First Presbyterian Church and Cemetery is the oldest institution in Woodbridge, encompassing part of the ground that was given under the terms of the Woodbridge Township charter of 1669 specifically for religious purposes. The property includes the site of the town's first meeting house (1675), its first graveyard (the oldest grave marker currently bears the date 1690), and the present church structure (1803). In the early eighteenth century, the unified, town-wide, Independent congregation divided when the meeting house became Presbyterian and a small faction of the congregation withdrew to form what became Trinity Church, an Episcopalian congregation. This split into two denominations can be seen more vividly at Woodbridge than perhaps anywhere else in New Jersey, as it not only reflected two fundamentally opposing ways of being Christian but also reflected the birth of denominationalism in American religious history. The land given under the 1669 charter was formally subdivided in 1784 between the two congregations, with Trinity receiving the northern portion and the First Presbyterian Church the southern portion (Trinity Episcopal Church and its Cemetery were listed in the New Jersey and National Registers in 2004).

The First Presbyterian Church and Cemetery thus meets National Register Criteria Consideration A for a religious property that is associated with an important historic event: the split between the Presbyterian and Episcopalian congregations in Woodbridge. This event was further cemented when the present church edifice was built in 1803, replacing the original meeting house. In addition, the First Presbyterian Church Cemetery meets Criteria Consideration D as a cemetery that is significant for its great age and as a significant expression of gravestone art through the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The cemetery is one of the most well-preserved collections of the eighteenth century Puritan funerary art that can be found in New Jersey. The range of Puritan symbols used, from the death's head to tree of life, reflects Puritan religious beliefs and burial traditions, and the burials in the cemetery represent Woodbridge's early settlement and history.

**Early Physical Development**

The following excerpt from the National Register nomination form for the adjacent Trinity Episcopal Church describes Woodbridge's early settlement and the charter that established property for religious purposes:

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The Elizabethtown Tract encompassing the future Woodbridge area was originally inhabited by Raritan Indians, who, according to historian Dorothy Ludewig, were part of the Sanhican branch of the Unami Lenapes.<sup>1</sup> On October 28<sup>th</sup>, 1664, this land was acquired from members of the Lenapes by associates, John Bayly, Daniel Denton and Luke Watson for thirty-six pounds.<sup>2</sup> Denton subsequently sold his shares of land to John Ogden and John Baker, while Bayly sold his shares to Philip Carteret, the newly appointed governor of New Jersey and a distant cousin of Sir George Carteret, the East Jersey Proprietor under James, Duke of York.<sup>3</sup> On December 11<sup>th</sup>, 1666, with Baker absent, Carteret, Ogden and Watson conveyed one-half of their shares to a group of ten associates from Newbury, Haverhill, Yarmouth and Barnstable, Massachusetts, for eighty pounds.<sup>4</sup> This six-mile-square tract was bounded by the Arthur Cull [Kill] to the east, Rahway River to the north, the Watchung mountains to the west and the Raritan River to the south.

The period between spring 1668 and early summer 1669 represented a major period of settlement in Woodbridge Township, whereby the number of free-holders increased from thirteen men to sixty-nine men by the time of its charter on June 1<sup>st</sup>, 1669.<sup>5</sup> Concurrently, Surveyor-General Robert Vauquellin completed his survey of the township during the early summer of 1669. The New Jersey Proprietors, Governor Carteret and the associates were empowered by the township charter to retain more shares of land than the freeholders. In the initial offering, individual tracts ranged between 30 and 512 acres for the associates, and between 15 and 448 acres for the freeholders.<sup>6</sup> Among the provisions within the town's charter were a system of quit-rents, mandating a payment from each associate and freeholder of an English half-penny per acre per year.<sup>7</sup> The township was to collect these payments on behalf of Governor Carteret, who administered the territory under the authority of the Duke of York, acting on behalf of King Charles, II. In addition, the charter empowered the townspeople to elect their own magistrates and justices to administer their public affairs and enforce their laws.<sup>8</sup> Other provisions entailed the allowance for free trade without tax, permission to organize the militia in defense of Indian attacks, the right of the freeholders and associates to admit inhabitants of their own choosing, and the election of two deputies to participate in the law-making process.<sup>9</sup>

In addition, Woodbridge's town charter included a provision for the exercise of free religion that had been previously introduced through a land patent agreement by Governor Richard Nicolls, Philip Carteret's predecessor. This was complemented by the English monarchy's allotment of two hundred acres of tax-exempt land to support a ministry.<sup>10</sup> Article 4 of the *Charter Granted to the Towne of Woodbridge June 1<sup>st</sup>, 1669* stated:

That they have the power by the pluralitie of voices of the Freeholders and freemen of the said corporation to choose their owne minister or ministers for the service of God and the administring of his Holy Sacraments, and being so chosen, inducted and admitted, all persons as well the Freeholders, as others the

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freemen and inhabitants admitted in the said corporation or township shall contribute according to their estates for his maintenance, towards which charge there shall be two hundred acres of good upland and meadow laid out, to the use and behoof of the said minister... which said Land shall not be allionated, but shall remaine from one incumbant to another for ever. Which said land... for the building of a Church [and] church-yard... shall be exempted from paying the Lord's Rent of a halfe penny pr. Acre, or any other rate or taxes whatsoever for ever.<sup>11</sup>

The permissive language of the town charter pertaining to religious practice and land allocation not only enabled the Woodbridge inhabitants to establish their own independent church, but also to introduce other denominations into the township as religious preferences evolved and changed.<sup>12</sup>

*Kirk Green*

Ten acres of land, known as "Kirk Green" or "Meeting-house Green," was set aside for the building of a meeting house. In addition, Woodbridge's town charter of 1669 had allotted 200 acres of land for the maintenance of the ministry and the parsonage grounds. The freeholders of the town supervised both of these plots, and any revenue made from the 200 acres supported the ministry. Kirk Green was the "spot upon which the first ecclesiastical structure in the township was built."<sup>13</sup> The 10-acre area was bounded on the north by a brook.<sup>14</sup> According to a late nineteenth century history, it was "supposed that the first religious services were held in a small house, near or upon the Green, which was used until the meeting-house was constructed."<sup>15</sup> (The First Presbyterian Church and Cemetery and the adjacent Trinity Episcopal Church currently occupy part of the original Kirk Green.)

*The Meeting House*

In October 1674, the town decided to build a meeting house, "thirty feet square,"<sup>16</sup> with the hope of attracting a permanent minister. The meeting house stood on the Green; according to Rev. Joseph P. Dally, it was located near the northeast corner of the current First Presbyterian Church.<sup>17</sup> On May 27, 1675, the frame of the meeting house was erected; the town was asked to help defray the costs of the building. The floor was laid in 1680, and the walls were whitewashed in 1698. The meeting house was described as "a building about thirty feet square, unpainted inside or out with no steeple or bell without, and no stove within."<sup>18</sup> It was also said that the meeting house was "plain in its architecture and furnishings... Pews ran around the walls and criss-crossed in a most confusing fashion. Pews were rented by the year."<sup>19</sup> A separate pew was placed on one side for public officials. No stoves were ever installed in the building, as this was considered sacrilegious by the Puritans,<sup>20</sup> but a small steeple was eventually built, with the roof being supported by two pillars from the center. A circular pulpit lifted the minister above the congregation. Until 1700, the meeting house served as the seat of the Woodbridge government as well as a church.<sup>21</sup> This building stood until 1802. Church records indicate that when the building was dismantled, the timbers were spread out to determine what could be reused in the new church.<sup>22</sup>

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Cemetery, Woodbridge,  
Middlesex County, New JerseySection number 8 Page 4**Tension between Protestant Sects**

The lack of a common religious tradition in East Jersey that Ahlstrom described led to early conflict within the Woodbridge Church. This conflict, which evolved around pastors' salaries and theological leanings, had its roots in the European religious struggles between the Puritans and the Anglicans. The English Reformation of the sixteenth century resulted in the split between the Church of England and the Roman Catholic authority. Brought forth by Henry VIII's desire to annul his marriage to Catherine of Aragon, the political split meant that the English monarch would replace the Pope as head of the Church of England. The Reformation culminated with the Elizabethan Religious Settlement in 1559, which re-established the church's independence from Rome and set the order of the English church, including the establishment of the Book of Common Prayer. This created a tenuous union between the Catholic and Protestant wings of the Church of England and created a neologism referred to as Anglicanism.

The English Reformation brought forth a powerful Puritan movement to reform the English church and to reshape how the church governed itself. Puritans wanted to purify and revive what they believed to be the true religion of England, which they felt had been corrupted by church rituals, by contact with pagan civilizations, and by the impositions of kings and popes. The Puritans were primarily composed of radical Protestants that criticized the monarchy-ruled church and wanted the church to more closely resemble the Protestant churches of Europe. Royal hostility towards Puritanism became more evident during the sovereignty of King James I and continued in 1625 when Charles I took the throne, leading to the "great Puritan migration to America" in the 1630s.<sup>23</sup> The English Civil War of the 1640s pitted the Royalist forces, supporters of the King and the established church hierarchy, against the Parliamentary forces that sought to curb royal power and reform the religion. The success of the Parliamentary forces brought Puritan leader Oliver Cromwell into power, and for a time Anglicanism was abolished. However, the religious changes of the civil war were swept away with the restoration of Charles II, including the return of Anglicanism as the state church, leading to the Great Persecution of other Protestant groups, begun in 1662. "Social inequality, imprisonment, and legal harassment became the order of the day" for groups such as the Presbyterians.<sup>24</sup> After religious revolts in England in 1685, Puritans and dissenters were banished by James II. By this time, many Puritans had already immigrated to America (primarily New England) in search of religious freedom.

The early settlers of East Jersey were mainly New Englanders who arrived in Newark and Woodbridge in the 1660s.<sup>25</sup> Around 1685, a ship of Scottish settlers arrived in Woodbridge; between 1690 and 1720, they were joined by an influx of Scotch-Irish settlers from New England.<sup>26</sup> Sydney E. Ahlstrom's *A Religious History of the American People* describes the early religious history of the "Middle Colonies" and East Jersey in particular. The "Middle Colonies," according to Ahlstrom, would "connote nothing of New England's regional homogeneity" and were not "distinguished by... a common religious tradition."<sup>27</sup> Yet, as Ahlstrom depicted, "...they do have a distinctive character, deriving from a cultural and religious pluralism which in some ways anticipated the experience of the future American nation."<sup>28</sup> In reference to East Jersey, which included Woodbridge, Ahlstrom indicates:

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Following the lead of Newark, East Jersey became predominantly Puritan. These were days when some men were in flight from the "great persecution" visited upon Puritans in Restoration England, when Baptists and Quakers were kept on the move by legal and corporeal harassment, and when considerable numbers of New Englanders emigrated to new frontiers to found more strictly regulated Puritan communities. As ever, the lust for new land drew men on. One after another towns were founded: Shrewsbury, Perth Amboy, Middletown, Elizabethtown, Woodbridge – each of them conceived as a New Zion and enacting laws appropriate to that conception. Town and church were integrated; in each village the church was at the center...<sup>29</sup>

By 1669, there had been discussion at a Woodbridge town meeting of acquiring a minister for the town by sending residents out to interview potential ministers. Because so few ministers were trained in the colonies, the congregation also had to write to Scotland and England. By 1671, it was decided that there was a need for a permanent minister, as during the first several years of the settlement there had only been a few months of formal religious services. The first permanent minister, Rev. John Allin, arrived in 1680.<sup>30</sup>

Once Rev. Allin arrived in Woodbridge, the decision was made to raise the minister's salary through town taxes. However, by the early 1700s, protests had begun against the tax for the minister's salary, led mainly by Woodbridge Quakers who in 1704 re-established a separate meeting house for worship in the town.<sup>31</sup> As different religious groups developed, the church and state separated, and individual churches became responsible for the cost of their own clergy.

In the early eighteenth century, there was a growing tension at the Woodbridge meeting house between those who were loyal to the Anglican Church and those who leaned towards the Presbyterian Church. The Presbyterian Church was represented by the Presbytery of Philadelphia, which was founded in 1706, and the Anglican Church was represented by the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, which was established in 1701 by King William III to broaden the influence of the growing Church of England by sending missionaries to America.<sup>32</sup> Between 1702 and 1707, Anglican ministers preached periodically in Woodbridge.<sup>33</sup>

In 1707, Rev. Nathaniel Wade became minister at the Woodbridge meeting house, but his term was very problematic because he was a Boston Congregationalist and organized his church accordingly.<sup>34</sup> The congregation became divided between those who supported Wade and those who were against him; opposition to Wade was due to both his personal unpopularity and the division in the religious views of the congregation between the pro-Presbyterians and the pro-Anglicans.<sup>35</sup>

Because of their problems with the Congregationalist teachings of Rev. Wade, the pro-Presbyterian members of the congregation appealed to the Presbytery of Philadelphia for help.<sup>36</sup> In a 1708 letter from the Presbytery to several New England clergymen, the Presbytery stated, "We find by diverse letters

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which have passed between you and sundry persons in Woodbridge, that you are not unacquainted with the confusions and distractions arising from the succession of Mr. Wade to be minister of that town, and the aversion of a considerable part of the people to the accepting of him as such."<sup>37</sup>

To appease the growing Presbyterian faction, Wade began holding Presbyterian services, and on September 10, 1710, Wade and his Woodbridge congregation officially joined the Presbytery of Philadelphia.<sup>38</sup> However, the pro-Anglican faction, who had also pressed for the removal of Wade as minister, were further alienated by the official joining of the Presbyterian Church.

In 1711, the church officially split when the pro-Anglican part of the congregation sent for a minister to establish a new Episcopalian church.<sup>39</sup> They wrote to Rev. Edward Vaughan, an Episcopalian missionary at Elizabethtown, to request:

Sir the unhappy difference between Mr. Wade and the people of Woodbridge, is grown to that height, that we cannot joyn with him in the worship of God as Xtians ought to do, it is the desire of some people here that if you think it may be for the Glory of God, and no damage to other Churches, that you would be pleased to afford us your help sometimes on the Sabbath days, according as you shall think convenient; we do it not with any intent to augment the difference among us, but rather hope that with the blessing of God, it may be a means for our better joyning together in setting up the true worship of our Lord Jesus Christ, here amongst a poor deluded people, this is the desire of your humble servants.<sup>40</sup>

Arriving in 1711, Rev. Vaughan became the first Episcopal minister in Woodbridge. In a letter dated September 28, 1716, to the Secretary of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, Rev. Vaughan stated that his arrival in Woodbridge was due to the residents "being deeply scandalized and much offended with the irregular life and conversation of Mr. Nathaniel Wade, their then congregational leader."<sup>41</sup> According to Vaughan, up to this point, the congregation had been "bred... in the greatest prejudice and opposition to the established Church of England."<sup>42</sup> Vaughan began to build his Episcopalian church almost immediately; it stood on the Green, north of the meeting house. The 10-acre green was now firmly divided between two opposing denominations: the Presbyterians and the Episcopalian.

The rift between them lasted for many years; hostility came from both sides. In 1770, it was reported that "much ill-feeling was exhibited between the Episcopal and Presbyterian congregations."<sup>43</sup> Part of this hostility stemmed from the desire of the Episcopalian to control more of the 200 acres of land that had been set aside in the original charter for religious use. This matter was taken to court in 1774, but the Revolutionary War began before it could be resolved.<sup>44</sup> In 1784, the land was formally subdivided and the Anglicans received the northern portion while the Presbyterians received the southern portion.

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### Development of a Strong Independent Presbyterian Church in America

The establishment of an independent American Presbyterian Church is summed up in a history of the Woodbridge First Presbyterian Church as:

By 1760, the separation from Europe was complete. The Presbyterian church had begun in the colonies under conditions lacking an established church; in its Presbyteries and Synod it had created an exclusively American authority.. it had founded its own educational institution to train its ministers, and the great majority of its ministers were graduates of the colonial colleges. In short, well before the American Revolution, the Presbyterian church had become an American institution.<sup>45</sup>

According to Thomas Weber's *The Heritage of the First Presbyterian Church of Metuchen, N.J.*, "The plurality of religious organizations, the trend toward the separation of religious and civil authority, and the occasional friction that developed between the royal governors and the churches after 1702 all created an incentive for the Congregational Churches in New Jersey to develop a closer organization in order to maintain themselves."<sup>46</sup> The early Presbyterians looked to establish their own form of governance in the form of representation by elders in a Presbytery. In order to prevent interference from both civil and religious leaders, some New Jersey churches sought to be admitted to the Presbytery of Philadelphia.<sup>47</sup> The Philadelphia Presbytery established a religious authority completely separate from the civil authority of the governor. The Presbytery was exclusively American and it protected the Presbyterians from English religious governance in the form of bishops and also from further persecution as they broke away from England.

The first Presbytery of the colonies, that of Philadelphia, was formed in 1706 with eight ministers to organize and offer the right to worship, preach, teach, and administer sacraments.<sup>48</sup> The Presbytery of Philadelphia was made up of churches in Maryland, Delaware, and Philadelphia and some churches in New Jersey and Long Island. The first Synod (regional governing body consisting of several presbyteries) in the United States, also of Philadelphia, was organized in 1716 in response to growth in immigration and congregants. The Synod originally consisted of four Presbyteries: Long Island (including New York and New Jersey churches); Philadelphia (including Pennsylvania churches), New Castle (including Delaware churches), and Snow Hill (including Maryland churches).<sup>49</sup> In 1733, the Presbytery of East Jersey was created, but by 1738 it was united with the Presbytery of Long Island to form the Presbytery of New York. When the Presbytery of New York divided in 1809, churches in northern New Jersey became part of the Presbytery of Jersey. In 1824, the newly established Synod of New Jersey divided the Presbytery of Jersey into the Presbyteries of Elizabeth Town and Newark. Elizabeth Town was dissolved in 1870 and was replaced by the Presbytery of Elizabeth, consisting of Union, Middlesex, and Somerset counties north of the Raritan River and some parts of Hunterdon County.<sup>50</sup> Today, the First Presbyterian Church of Woodbridge is a member of the Elizabeth Presbytery in the Synod of the Northeast.



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As the leaders of the Presbyterian Church in America sought to create a new church that was not simply a transplant of an established church from Europe, questions arose over the qualifications of their ministers, such as whether or not they had attended college. To further establish their independence from Europe, the Presbyterian Church began to found more colleges in America to train its own ministers, so that there would be less reliance on European training and more of an "Americanization" of the denomination.<sup>51</sup> In 1745, four members of the Synod of New York, including Woodbridge minister Rev. John Pierson, contacted New Jersey Governor Lewis Morris about founding such a college.<sup>52</sup> A charter was granted in 1756 by Governor John Hamilton, thus establishing the College of New Jersey, later known as Princeton University. Rev. John Pierson was important in the founding of the college, being one of the original petitioners, and he served on its Board of Trustees for 19 years.

Rev. John Pierson was also instrumental in applying for a royal charter for the Woodbridge Church, so that the use of land would be preserved in perpetuity for the meeting house, burial ground, and parsonage. In 1754, the freeholders of Woodbridge appointed a committee to seek a royal charter for the church's legal possession of the land from the Lord's Proprietors. The land was granted by George II of England through Royal Governor Jonathan Belcher in September 1756.<sup>53</sup> With this, the trustees of the church were given legal possession of the land and the church was incorporated as "The First Presbyterian Church of Woodbridge."

In 1763, Rev. Azel Roe was invited to be the minister of the First Presbyterian Church of Woodbridge. It was during his tenure that the Metuchen Presbyterian congregation united with Woodbridge in 1767, as Metuchen was at that time a community within the western portion of Woodbridge Township. Roe served both congregations for 20 years by traveling between them, often preaching to the Metuchen congregation in private homes. Metuchen eventually took over payment of one-third of the rent of the 200 acres of land set aside for religious purposes as well as half of the minister's salary; because of this, they wanted an equal share of the property. Metuchen's claim on the parsonage land was later denied in court in 1800. The Metuchen congregation officially became known as the "Second Presbyterian Church of Woodbridge" in 1787 and this lasted until 1793.<sup>54</sup> The Woodbridge Church applied to the Presbytery of New York for a separation of the churches in 1792. This was denied at first, but the church reapplied in 1793 and the separation was finally granted.<sup>55</sup>

Another split in the First Presbyterian Church came in 1874. Between 1837 and 1869, the American Presbyterian Church was facing a crisis. The church was divided between the "Old School" and "New School" ways of thinking, which focused on questions of doctrine and church government. This division also led to disunity within the Woodbridge Church.<sup>56</sup> The First Presbyterian Church was of the "Old School" way of thinking, which was more conservative and focused on church tradition. However, some Congregationalist-leaning members of the church had begun to align themselves with the new way of thinking, which allowed a more liberal interpretation of doctrine and promoted the use of non-denominational societies to help run church programs.<sup>57</sup> Even though the two schools of thought reunited in 1869 elsewhere in the country, much damage had been caused in Woodbridge.

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By 1874, Rev. Joseph McNulty was called to the Woodbridge pastorate, but the entire congregation was not in agreement with this decision; this division stemmed from a lack of communication in the church administration.<sup>58</sup> A small group claimed "it had not been given due consideration in a business meeting held for the purpose of calling a pastor."<sup>59</sup> This led to dissension in the church and ultimately a group of 38 members were granted letters of dismissal; they left to form the First Congregational Church of Woodbridge.<sup>60</sup>

### The First Presbyterian Church in the American Revolution

The Township of Woodbridge was actively involved in the American Revolution. Several members of the First Presbyterian Church congregation and clergy played important roles in the Revolutionary War.

Woodbridge residents had their first exposure to the war on April 23, 1775, when they received a message about the conflict at Lexington. Like other Presbyterians in the Colonies, First Presbyterian Church members in Woodbridge would become extremely devoted to the cause of independence. It has been said, "Presbyterians were second to none in their patriotic devotion to the cause of American independence."<sup>61</sup> Many Presbyterian ministers revolted against the British, preaching that King George III had broken the social contract with the colonists. They also resented the push by Anglicans to have an American bishop appointed for the colonies.<sup>62</sup> Anglicans (i.e. Episcopalians) were more often loyal to the British side in the Revolution.

Woodbridge was occupied by the British from December 2, 1776 to June 22, 1777.<sup>63</sup> The Episcopal Church was used as an English barracks, while the rectory was used as an English fort. However, many men from the First Presbyterian Church were volunteers for the American army and the Middlesex militia.<sup>64</sup> Clashes between the two armies were common in the area; the British often raided farms and homes, causing much hardship for church members and other residents of Woodbridge. They often took personal possessions. Dally notes, "Woodbridge, during 1776, was the scene of the greatest excitement. Troops were constantly passing and repassing through the town. In the latter part of the year, the British had collected about 400 head of cattle and 200 sheep in the place, intending that these should feed their troops during the cold winter; but a company of impudent American militia entered the town on the night of the 11<sup>th</sup> of December and quietly drove John Bull's beef and mutton into the other camp."<sup>65</sup>

Some church members have been singled out for their extraordinary efforts during the Revolutionary War. Dr. Moses Bloomfield was described as a "man of more than ordinary culture and ability. His patriotism was fervent and he offered his services to his country at a very early period of the war and became Senior Physician and Surgeon in the hospitals of the United States. He was a Representative in the Provincial Congress and General Assembly and an Elder of the Presbyterian Church."<sup>66</sup> Rev. Dr. Azel Roe was minister for the church during and after the Revolution and he was also a devoted patriot. It was said that "on one occasion he incited some of his members to assist a company of Continental

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troops in attacking some British soldiers near Blazing Star in the northeastern part of Woodbridge. Subsequently, he was taken prisoner and removed to New York, where he was compelled for a short time to accept the dubious hospitality of the Sugar House prison."<sup>67</sup>

### Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Developments

#### *The First Presbyterian Church of Woodbridge*

The 1675 meeting house was replaced in 1803 by the present structure in almost the exact location on the "Kirk Green." The new church structure was designed and built by congregation member Jonathan Freeman. Rev. Dr. Azel Roe, in his Historical Sermon, stated, "In April 1803, the people set about building them a new house of worship, their present house being old and going to decay, having stood for about a century. They undertook the building of the house with great unanimity and spirit and had it almost finished by fall. So that it was opened and consecrated in the beginning of December and is a very decent and convenient house, sufficiently large and spacious."<sup>68</sup> Money for the new 66' by 46' building was raised among the church members, who made payments between April 1802 and January 1804; in all, \$3,522 was raised.<sup>69</sup> It was voted that the new building "should be inclosed with shingles and what part of the old meeting house timber, etc., that will answer, be worked into the new."<sup>70</sup> Therefore, some of the wood used in the 1675 meeting house may have been used in the 1803 church.<sup>71</sup> The cornerstone of the new church, dated 1803, is now kept in the church's History Room.

Although the 1803 structure is extant, the church and surrounding site have undergone numerous changes since the original construction. In 1825, after the congregation was able to raise the necessary funds, a bell was added to the church. In 1839, a sexton's house was built, and in 1841, the congregation voted to build a new parsonage. In 1869, a new Sunday School addition was constructed at the rear of the church. The largest change came, however, in 1875 when the congregation remodeled the interior of the church and gave it a more "Victorian" look.<sup>72</sup> In addition, the pulpit was moved to be level with the congregation; an organ, new pews, and a gas chandelier (now electrified) were installed; and the first vestibule was built.

After the church's remodeling in 1875, Rev. McNulty noted of the original and remodeled church that the

plainness and simplicity and whiteness [was] so firmly and substantially constructed. A very expressive image in these very epithets of the character for the most part of those who originally erected and worshipped in it. The external shingling is suggestive of its antiquity. Within and without it has been reconstructed to bring it into sympathy with the modern ideas and tastes until it stands as a gem of beauty of which none of us need to be ashamed. As its earlier form embodied somewhat strikingly the character of its worshippers, is it true today that its remodeled beauty is also suggestive of the 'beauties of holiness' by which its present worshippers are distinguished?<sup>73</sup>

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Twentieth century changes to the church included the installation of electricity in 1902<sup>74</sup> and a steam heat system, installed in 1907. In 1911, the Parish House was built (later demolished in 1971) as a place for social events and recreational activities for the church members, and in 1956 a Fellowship Hall was constructed. In 1972, the exterior of the church building was extensively renovated, changes were made to the sanctuary, and a new Christian Education Annex replaced the Sunday School building.<sup>75</sup>

### *Clergy of the Nineteenth Century*

Rev. Dr. Azel Roe served the Woodbridge First Presbyterian Church from 1763 until 1815, and it has been said that, "The Pastorates which follow Dr. Roe's were shorter and less eventful."<sup>76</sup> During the term of Dr. Henry Mills, ordained in 1816, the Sunday School was established, "one of the first, if not the first, organized in the state."<sup>77</sup> Rev. Barton arrived in 1822 and stayed for almost 30 years, during which time he ran the Sunday School himself. Also during his term, the church experienced a revival in 1843, which caused a rise in church membership. Rev. Martin served as pastor between 1852 and 1863, during the time of crisis in the First Presbyterian Church between the "New School" and the "Old School" ways of thinking that would cause problems for the church in later years. The First Presbyterian Church Aid Society was also established during his term to raise money for the church. There were some losses in church membership during the term of Rev. Lucas between 1863 and 1873. Rev. Lucas was followed by Rev. McNulty, whose term faced the difficulties described above. However, he would stay to lead the Woodbridge congregation into the twentieth century.

### **Cemetery of the First Presbyterian Church of Woodbridge**

The First Presbyterian Church Cemetery is one of the oldest cemeteries in New Jersey. It is located on a five-acre site adjacent to the church, following the general English custom of placing the common burial ground next to a meeting house. It may have been in use as a burial site even before the town's meeting house was built in 1675, as European settlers had inhabited the area by the 1660s. However, the earliest known marker in the cemetery is a fieldstone dated 1690 and labeled, "E.F.B.F., 24, 1690."<sup>78</sup> The stone is one of the oldest known markers in Middlesex County, and is possibly for a member of the Bloomfield or Bunn families, two of the area's early settlers.

The cemetery contains approximately 3,000 known burials, including those of early settlers, church clergy, and soldiers from several conflicts, including the Revolutionary War, Civil War, World War I and World War II. Although the burials span more than 300 years, the most notable aspect of the cemetery is its high concentration of intact eighteenth century Puritan sandstone markers, the oldest known of which, for "James Greer aged 36 yrs," dates from 1702.

Before 1850, sandstone and marble were the most commonly used materials for stone markers in New Jersey. Sandstone, or "brownstone," which ranges in varying shades from reddish brown to white depending on mineral composition, was the most popular as it was relatively inexpensive and is one of the easiest stones to carve. In addition, it could be quarried locally, along banks of the Mullica Hill, Raritan,

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and Delaware Rivers and in the Newark and lower Hudson River Valley areas. Marble, which was a much harder material to carve and had to be imported from Pennsylvania, New York, or Connecticut, was expensive, but a very desirable material as it allowed for the carving of intricate designs. Marble was a more traditional material for grave markers and was often the preferred stone for the graves of high-ranking soldiers, civic and religious leaders, and statesmen, when available.<sup>79</sup> New England slate, most likely imported from Massachusetts or Rhode Island, was also used for some of the eighteenth century markers in this cemetery.<sup>80</sup> Although not as proportionally numerous as stones in other materials, the First Presbyterian Church Cemetery contains some good examples of slate markers, including an ornately carved marker for Moses Bloomfield dating from 1724.

Many of the eighteenth century sandstone markers, primarily in the form of upright sandstone slabs, were carved either by or in the tradition of Ebenezer Price and his apprentices Jonathan Acken, David Jeffries, and Abner Stewart.<sup>81</sup> Price (1728-1788) was active between 1747 and 1788 in Elizabethtown, Orange, Connecticut Farms, Westfield, and Woodbridge. His characteristic style, and that adopted by his apprentices, included stylized floral designs and faces of soul effigies with flat, square-shaped noses, distinctive eyebrows, and curled hair framing the face. These designs were based on traditional Puritan motifs brought from England to New Jersey by way of New England and Eastern Long Island.<sup>82</sup>

Because markers were often signed on the base or plinth, the signature portion of a stone often disappears as the stone sinks over time.<sup>83</sup> However, Price's signature is visible on Captain Nathaniel Fitz Randolph's sandstone marker, and the signature of one of Price's apprentices, Jonathan Acken, can still be seen on some of the stones, including that of William Edgar and several others. Other nineteenth century carvers known to be responsible for stones in the cemetery include John Frazee, the Lamsons of Boston, and Henry Osborn. Osborn lived in Woodbridge and his work, characterized by soul effigies with puffy cheeks and braided hair, can be found throughout the area.<sup>84</sup>

*Puritan Funerary Art*

Puritan funerary art engravings demonstrate both the fears and the hopes that Puritans associated with death and resurrection. Death involved more than just the passing away of one's flesh; it also meant a journey for the soul to heaven and eventual resurrection, as "the Puritan died in the hope that his soul would rise to heaven and there be glorified."<sup>85</sup> It has been said that, "Puritan funerary art shows a deep strain of passion and a naïve delight in mystical spiritualism."<sup>86</sup> The collection of engravings in the First Presbyterian Church Cemetery reflect this complex and often passionate symbolism.

The winged death's head, a skull flanked by wings, was a common symbol among the Puritans and symbolized "the transporting of the soul into Paradise."<sup>87</sup> The death's head and symbol of the glorified soul, depicted by a cherubic face flanked by wings, were known as "symbols of transformation."<sup>88</sup> These symbols depicted the soul's voyage toward new life through death. The death's head represented the beginning of the journey, while the glorified soul image symbolized the end of the journey: the head transformed into the soul. Around 1750, the death's head became a less common symbol, replaced in frequency of use by the "glorified soul image, having wings to speed the transporting of the soul to

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paradise.”<sup>89</sup> There are at least 100 death’s head and soul effigy markers in the First Presbyterian Church Cemetery, and they vary according to the style of the individual carvers, most of whom have never been identified.

Other Puritan symbols can also be found on gravestones in the cemetery. The hourglass represented the journey of the soul from death to life and also “the corruption and decay of the flesh.”<sup>90</sup> The distended cheeks of the cherubic faces signified the belief that the spirit left the body through the mouth upon death. A heart-shaped engraving showed a soul in bliss. The “tree of life” symbol has had significance since Sumerian times and it was adopted by the Puritans and many other groups to symbolize the ideal spiritual values.<sup>91</sup> The “crown of righteousness,” a crown atop a death’s head or soul effigy, represented resurrection in Christ. Extant examples of the skull and crossbones carving (often literally bones arranged in a cross), which symbolizes judgment and the mortality of the flesh, are few in this cemetery, but there are at least two known examples.

While some of the symbols found in Puritan funerary art may seem morbid or grotesque by modern standards, at the time they were commonplace. Death was considered as important a part of life as birth, and the symbols used show this as well as the belief in a journey to new life after death.<sup>92</sup>

As a heavy majority of the original settlers of Woodbridge were Puritans, it should be expected that many of the early markers would contain these images. As Puritanism split into different sects, the symbolism used in funerary art also changed. By the very late 1700s, it was much less common to employ the earlier Puritan motifs on stone, and by the early nineteenth century it became much more common to depict a floral design, funeral urn and/or tree, often a weeping willow.<sup>93</sup>

### *Graves of Interest*

Many of Woodbridge’s earliest settlers and important residents are buried in the First Presbyterian Church Cemetery, including mayors, businessmen, war heroes, and members of the Freeman, Cutter, Pike, Barron, Edgar, Ayers, Moore, Prall, Inslee, and Harned families. The first European child born in Woodbridge, Mary Compton Campbell (1668-1735), is buried in the cemetery and her sandstone marker is still extant. Another notable burial is of Jack, “a colour’d man who belonged to Jonathan Freeman. He was a faithful servant and died July 23, 1825, in the 43 year of his age.”<sup>94</sup> Freeman, who is also buried in this cemetery, was the architect of the current church. The slave’s original sandstone marker, now kept inside the church’s History Room, was deteriorating rapidly and replaced in 1998 by a duplicate, carved in Canadian pink granite.<sup>95</sup>

James Parker, who operated the first printing press in New Jersey, is buried in the cemetery, as is Dr. Moses Bloomfield, a physician and elder of the church who freed his 14 slaves after the Revolutionary War.

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Five former pastors are interred in the cemetery: Rev. Dr. Azel Roe; Rev. William B. Barton; Rev. Dr. Joseph M. McNulty; Rev. Robert W. Mark; and Rev. Earl Hannum Devanny, a veteran of both World Wars I and II.<sup>96</sup>

Numerous Revolutionary War soldiers, attesting to the congregation's affiliation with the cause for independence, are buried in the cemetery. Captain Nathaniel Fitz Randolph was killed in the Battle of Springfield in 1780, after having been a prisoner of war and exchanged for a British captive. His sandstone marker is ornately carved, with crossed swords above a soul effigy and sabers flanking the text. The stone, which contains an unusual mix of Puritan and military symbolism, is signed by Ebenezer Price and has unusual pockmarks on its front, reportedly from British bullets.<sup>97</sup> Also interred in the cemetery is General Nathaniel Heard, who in 1776 "marched to Amboy, under orders from Samuel Tucker, President of the Provincial Congress of New Jersey, to arrest Wm. Franklin, the Governor,"<sup>98</sup> as are many members of the Heard family. General Heard was known for his service under General George Washington and his efforts to capture and arrest loyalists on Long Island.

Among the notable Civil War veterans buried in the cemetery are General William Barton, son of Reverend Barton, and Colonel John Barron. John's uncle Thomas Barron, who donated money for the adjacent Barron Art Center, is also interred there. The Boynton family plot is located in the northwest corner of the cemetery and contains the grave of Cassimir W. Boynton, founder of the area's first hollow tile company in 1866. C.W. Boynton was also responsible for the first trolley service through Woodbridge, which he established to serve a resort area known as Boynton Beach, which he created in the Sewaren section of Woodbridge.

<sup>1</sup> Dorothy F.D. Ludewig, *Timely Told Tales of Woodbridge Township* (Plainfield, New Jersey: Boise Printing Press, 1970), 4, as cited in Gregory G. Dietrich, "Trinity Episcopal Church" (November 11, 2002, National Register of Historic Places Nomination copy at New Jersey Historic Preservation Office, Trenton, New Jersey).

<sup>2</sup> John Allen Latschar, *East New Jersey, 1665-1682: Perils of a Proprietary Government*, Rutgers University Doctorate of Philosophy Thesis, Department of History (New Brunswick, New Jersey: 1978), 127 & 143, as cited in Dietrich 2002.

<sup>3</sup> Latschar 1978, 143, as cited in Dietrich 2002.

<sup>4</sup> Latschar 1978, 127, as cited in Dietrich 2002.

<sup>5</sup> Latschar 1978, 129, as cited in Dietrich 2002.

<sup>6</sup> George A. Whitehead, *Contributions to the Early History of Perth Amboy and Adjoining Country with Sketches of Men and Events in New Jersey During the Provincial Era* (New York: D. Appleton & Company, 1856), 356-357, as cited in Dietrich 2002.

<sup>7</sup> Rev. Joseph W. Dally, *Woodbridge and Vicinity, the Story of a New Jersey Township: Embracing the History of Woodbridge, Piscataway, Metuchen and contiguous places, from the earliest times; the History of the different Ecclesiastical Bodies; Important Official Documents relating to the Township, etc.* (Lambertville, New Jersey: Hunterdon House, 1873; reprint 1989), Appendix A, as cited in Dietrich 2002.

<sup>8</sup> Dally 1989, Appendix A, as cited in Dietrich 2002.

<sup>9</sup> Dally 1989, Appendix A, as cited in Dietrich 2002.

<sup>10</sup> Latschar 1978, 40-41, as cited in Dietrich 2002.

<sup>11</sup> Dally 1989, Appendix A, as cited in Dietrich 2002.

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- <sup>12</sup> Dietrich 2002, 8-11 – 8-12.  
<sup>13</sup> Dally 1989, 76.  
<sup>14</sup> Rev. Joseph M. McNulty, *Historical Discourse Delivered at the Two Hundreth Anniversary of the First Presbyterian Church, Woodbridge, New Jersey* (New York: Cornwell Bros. & Vogler, 1875), 7.  
<sup>15</sup> Dally 1989, 77.  
<sup>16</sup> Dally 1989, 79.  
<sup>17</sup> Dally 1989, 76.  
<sup>18</sup> Morrow & Baker 1975, 6.  
<sup>19</sup> *Celebration of the 250<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the First Presbyterian Church* (Woodbridge, New Jersey: First Presbyterian Church, 1925), 12.  
<sup>20</sup> Virginia Bergen Troeger and Robert J. McEwen, *Woodbridge: New Jersey's Oldest Township* (Charleston, South Carolina: Arcadia Publishing, 2002), 24.  
<sup>21</sup> *First Presbyterian Church of Woodbridge*.  
<sup>22</sup> Ruth Wolk, *The History of Woodbridge, New Jersey* (Woodbridge, New Jersey, 1970), 20.  
<sup>23</sup> Ahlstrom 1972, 93.  
<sup>24</sup> Ahlstrom 1972, 95.  
<sup>25</sup> Maxine N. Lurie and Marc Mappen, ed., *Encyclopedia of New Jersey* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2004), 653.  
<sup>26</sup> Irving S. Kull, ed., *New Jersey: A History* (New York: The American Historical Society, Inc., 1930), 333.  
<sup>27</sup> Sydney E. Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972), 200.  
<sup>28</sup> Ahlstrom 1972, 200.  
<sup>29</sup> Ahlstrom 1972, 205-206.  
<sup>30</sup> Morrow & Baker 1975, 1.  
<sup>31</sup> Morrow & Baker 1975, 7.  
<sup>32</sup> Ahlstrom 1972, 220.  
<sup>33</sup> Dally 1989, 121.  
<sup>34</sup> Morrow & Baker 1975, 8.  
<sup>35</sup> Dally 1989, 170.  
<sup>36</sup> Morrow & Baker 1975, 8.  
<sup>37</sup> Charles Hodge, *The Constitutional History of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America* (Philadelphia: William S. Martien, 1839), 83.  
<sup>38</sup> Morrow & Baker 1975, 9.  
<sup>39</sup> Morrow & Baker 1975, 9.  
<sup>40</sup> Quoted in Dally 1989, 124.  
<sup>41</sup> Quoted in Dally 1989, 123.  
<sup>42</sup> Quoted in Dally 1989, 123.  
<sup>43</sup> Dally 1989, 132.  
<sup>44</sup> *Celebration of the 250<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the First Presbyterian Church* 1925, 13.  
<sup>45</sup> Morrow & Baker 1975, 13.  
<sup>46</sup> Thomas Weber, *The Heritage of the First Presbyterian Church of Metuchen, N.J.* (by the author, 1967), 8.  
<sup>47</sup> Weber 1967, 8.  
<sup>48</sup> Hall 1859, 39-40 and *A Brief History of the Presbyterian Church in this Country* n.d., n.p.  
<sup>49</sup> Loetscher 1978, 63.  
<sup>50</sup> *Historical Note* (< <http://elizabethpresbytery.org/History.htm>>).  
<sup>51</sup> Morrow & Baker 1975, 13.  
<sup>52</sup> Morrow & Baker 1975, 13.  
<sup>53</sup> Morrow & Baker 1975, 14; full text appears in Dally 1989, 303 (Appendix B).  
<sup>54</sup> Dally 1989, 224.



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- <sup>55</sup> Dally 1989, 225.  
<sup>56</sup> Morrow & Baker 1975, 26.  
<sup>57</sup> Morrow & Baker 1975, 27.  
<sup>58</sup> Morrow & Baker 1975, 33.  
<sup>59</sup> *Celebration of the 250<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the First Presbyterian Church 1925*, 19.  
<sup>60</sup> Morrow & Baker 1975, 25.  
<sup>61</sup> Loetscher 1978, 73.  
<sup>62</sup> Loetscher 1978, 73.  
<sup>63</sup> Morrow & Baker 1975, 17.  
<sup>64</sup> Morrow & Baker 1975, 17.  
<sup>65</sup> Dally 1989, 243.  
<sup>66</sup> Morrow & Baker 1975, 19.  
<sup>67</sup> Dally 1989, 228.  
<sup>68</sup> Quoted in Dally 1989, 21.  
<sup>69</sup> Morrow & Baker 1975, 21.  
<sup>70</sup> *Celebration of the 250<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the First Presbyterian Church 1925*, 17.  
<sup>71</sup> *Celebration of the 250<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the First Presbyterian Church 1925*, 17.  
<sup>72</sup> *First Presbyterian Church of Woodbridge*.  
<sup>73</sup> *Celebration of the Two Hundred and Twenty-Fifth Anniversary of the First Presbyterian Church of Woodbridge, New Jersey* (New York: Press of Wm. J. Schauffele, 1900), 15.  
<sup>74</sup> *First Presbyterian Church of Woodbridge*.  
<sup>75</sup> Morrow & Baker 1975, 46.  
<sup>76</sup> Morrow & Baker 1975, 22.  
<sup>77</sup> Morrow & Baker 1975, 22.  
<sup>78</sup> Elias Holtzman, "History lives for cemetery keeper," *Home News Tribune* (July 24, 1997).  
<sup>79</sup> Janice Kohl Sarapin, *Old Burial Grounds of New Jersey* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1994), 20.  
<sup>80</sup> Mark Nonesteid, Staff Member to the Middlesex County Cultural & Heritage Commission, personal communication with Tyreen Reuter, April 5, 2004, and January 30, 2007.  
<sup>81</sup> Nonesteid 2004 and Sarapin 1994, 26.  
<sup>82</sup> David Steven Cohen, *The Folklore and Folklife of New Jersey* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1983), 104.  
<sup>83</sup> Nonesteid 2004.  
<sup>84</sup> Nonesteid 2007.  
<sup>85</sup> Allan I. Ludwig, *Graven Images: New England Stonecarving and its Symbols, 1650-1815* (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1966), 202.  
<sup>86</sup> Morrow & Baker 1975, 50.  
<sup>87</sup> Morrow & Baker 1975, 51.  
<sup>88</sup> Ludwig 1966, 67.  
<sup>89</sup> Morrow & Baker 1975, 52.  
<sup>90</sup> Ludwig 1966, 197.  
<sup>91</sup> Ludwig 1966, 109.  
<sup>92</sup> Ludwig 1966, 77.  
<sup>93</sup> Morrow & Baker 1975, 56 and Cohen 1983, 100-102.  
<sup>94</sup> Holtzman 1997, n.p.; headstone engraving.  
<sup>95</sup> Eleanor Barret, "173 years later, a new headstone gives Jack the slave added dignity," *The Star-Ledger* (May 25, 1998), n.p.  
<sup>96</sup> Morrow & Baker 1975, 89-91.  
<sup>97</sup> *The Cemetery of the First Presbyterian Church of Woodbridge* (<http://www.oldwhitechurch.org/Cemetery/Cemetery.htm>).  
<sup>98</sup> Dally 1989, 242.

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1956/1981 Perth Amboy, NJ USGS 7.5 Minute Quadrangle.

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### VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The property being nominated consists of the entirety of Lot 1 of Block 564 of the tax map of the Township of Woodbridge, which includes the church, cemetery, and surrounding landscaped areas. The 5.24-acre triangular-shaped piece of property is bordered on the north by Trinity Lane, on the south and east by Woodbridge (Port Reading) Avenue, and on the west by Rahway Avenue. Beginning at the northeast corner of Rahway and Port Reading Avenues, the boundary of the nominated property proceeds northwards 200 feet along Rahway Avenue, then turns a few degrees further west and continues for another 270 feet. It then turns eastward along the northern property line for a distance of 370 feet. The property line turns a few degrees south and continues eastward for another 420 feet. From this point, the boundary proceeds southward along the eastern boundary for 20 feet and then turns southeast along the southern boundary for 100 feet. Again the property line turns a few degrees south and then continues another 830 feet southwestward. The property line then curves northward to meet its starting point at the intersection of Rahway and Port Reading Avenues.

### BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The nominated property includes all of the property in Lot 1 of Block 564, including the cemetery, as it contains all extant elements historically associated with this resource.

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### Photographs

#### For all photographs:

Property Name: First Presbyterian Church and Cemetery  
Property Location: Township of Woodbridge, Middlesex County, New Jersey  
Location of Negatives: ARCH<sup>2</sup>, Inc.  
16 Wernik Place  
Metuchen, New Jersey 08840-2422

#### Photographs 1, 2, 8 through 21, and 24:

Photographer: Tyreen A. Reuter  
Date: January, 2007

#### Photographs 3 and 7:

Photographer: Janice Armstrong  
Date: June, 2005

#### Photographs 4 through 6, 22, 23, and 25:

Photographer: Blaire Walsh  
Date: June, 2006

No. 1 of 25: View of the church looking northeast from the west side of Rahway Avenue, near the intersection with Port Reading Avenue.

No. 2 of 25: View looking west towards the cemetery from the eastern end of the lot.

No. 3 of 25: View looking southeast towards the main façade of the church.

No. 4 of 25: View looking southeast towards the north elevation of the church.

No. 5 of 25: View looking east towards the south elevation of the church.

No. 6 of 25: View looking southwest towards the east façade of the addition to the rear of the main block of the church.

No. 7 of 25: Detailed view looking southeast towards the steeple.

No. 8 of 25: View looking northeast towards the main façade of Fellowship Hall.

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No. 9 of 25: View looking southeast towards representative markers within the cemetery.

No. 10 of 25: Detailed view of a sandstone marker with a soul effigy carving.

No. 11 of 25: Detailed view of a sandstone marker with a variation of a soul effigy carving.

No. 12 of 25: Detailed view of a sandstone marker with heart and soul effigy carvings.

No. 13 of 25: Detailed view of a sandstone marker with a skull and crossbones carving.

No. 14 of 25: View looking south towards an intact grouping of sandstone markers.

No. 15 of 25: Detailed view of William Edgar's sandstone marker with the carver's name, Jonathan Acken, visible near the base.

No. 16 of 25: Detailed view of Captain Nathaniel Fitz Randolph's sandstone marker with the carver's name, Ebenezer Price, visible near the base.

No. 17 of 25: Detailed view of an ornately carved slate marker for a member of the Bloomfield family.

No. 18 of 25: Detailed view of a representative nineteenth century marker in the cemetery.

No. 19 of 25: Detailed view of a Terra Cotta marker located in the cemetery.

No. 20 of 25: View looking east within the church towards the organ and interior of the nave.

No. 21 of 25: View looking north within the nave of the church towards the detailing on the pews.

No. 22 of 25: View looking northwest within the church towards the chandelier and galleries.

No. 23 of 25: Detailed view of the original rubble steeple supports visible in the basement under the main block of the church.

No. 24 of 25: View looking southeast towards the Reading Room on the ground floor of the addition.

No. 25 of 25: View looking southeast towards one of the classrooms on the second story of the addition.

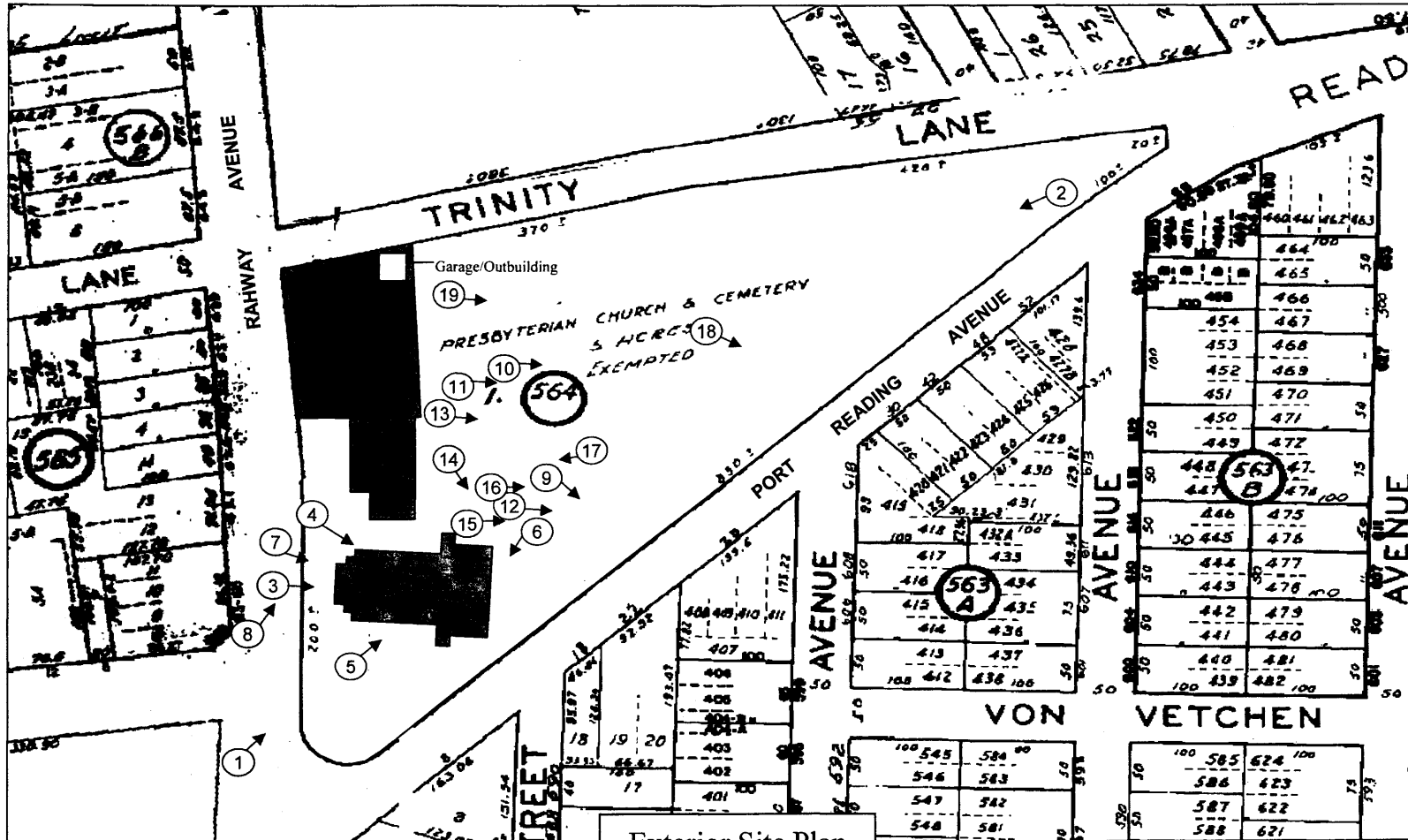
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and Site Plan

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Exterior Site Plan



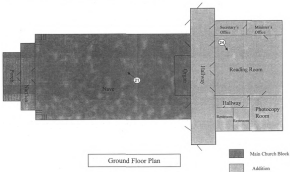
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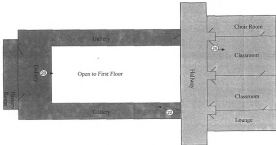
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Jersey



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Second Floor Plan

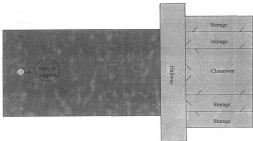
- Main Church Block
- Addition

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Jersey



Basement Level Plan

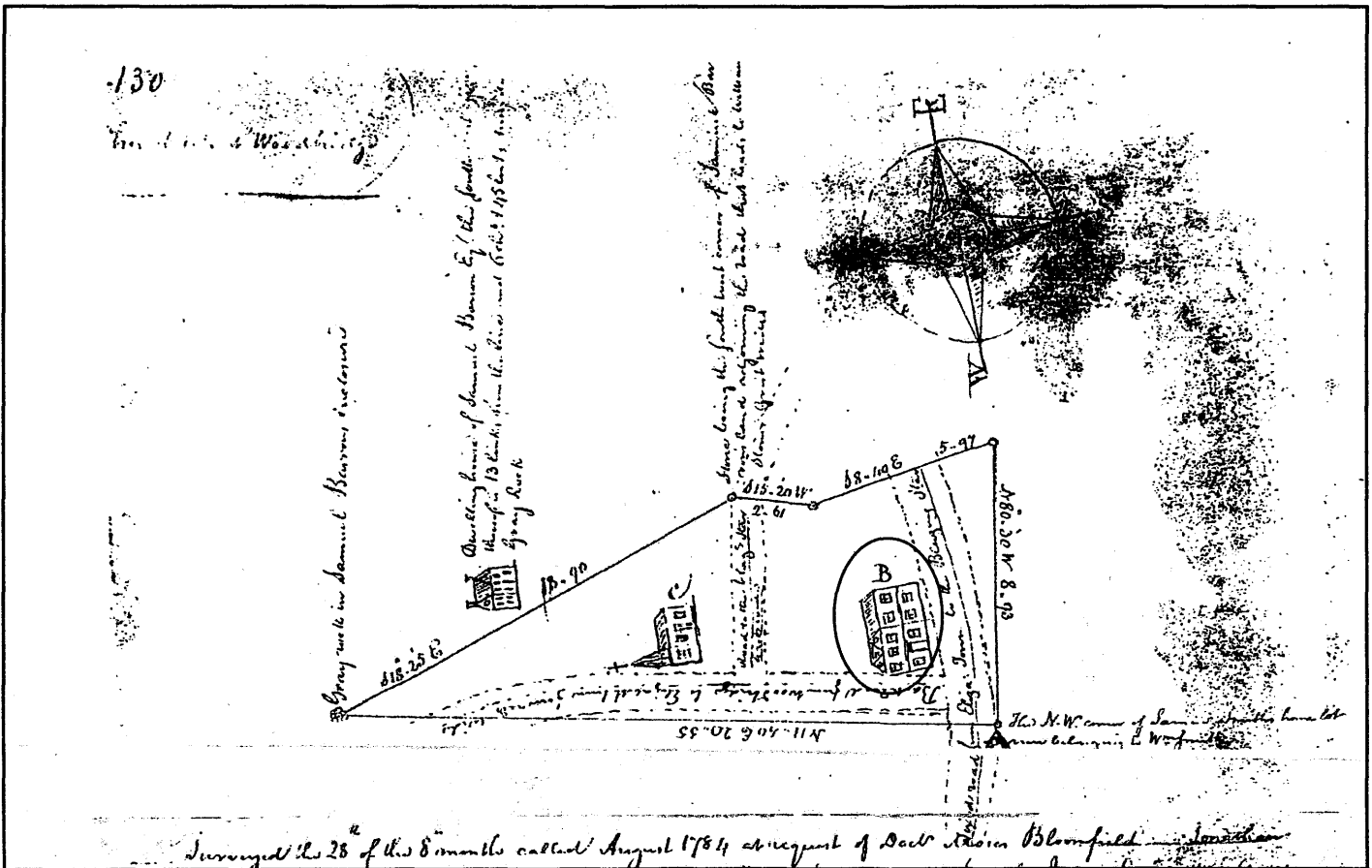
-  Main Church Block
-  Addition

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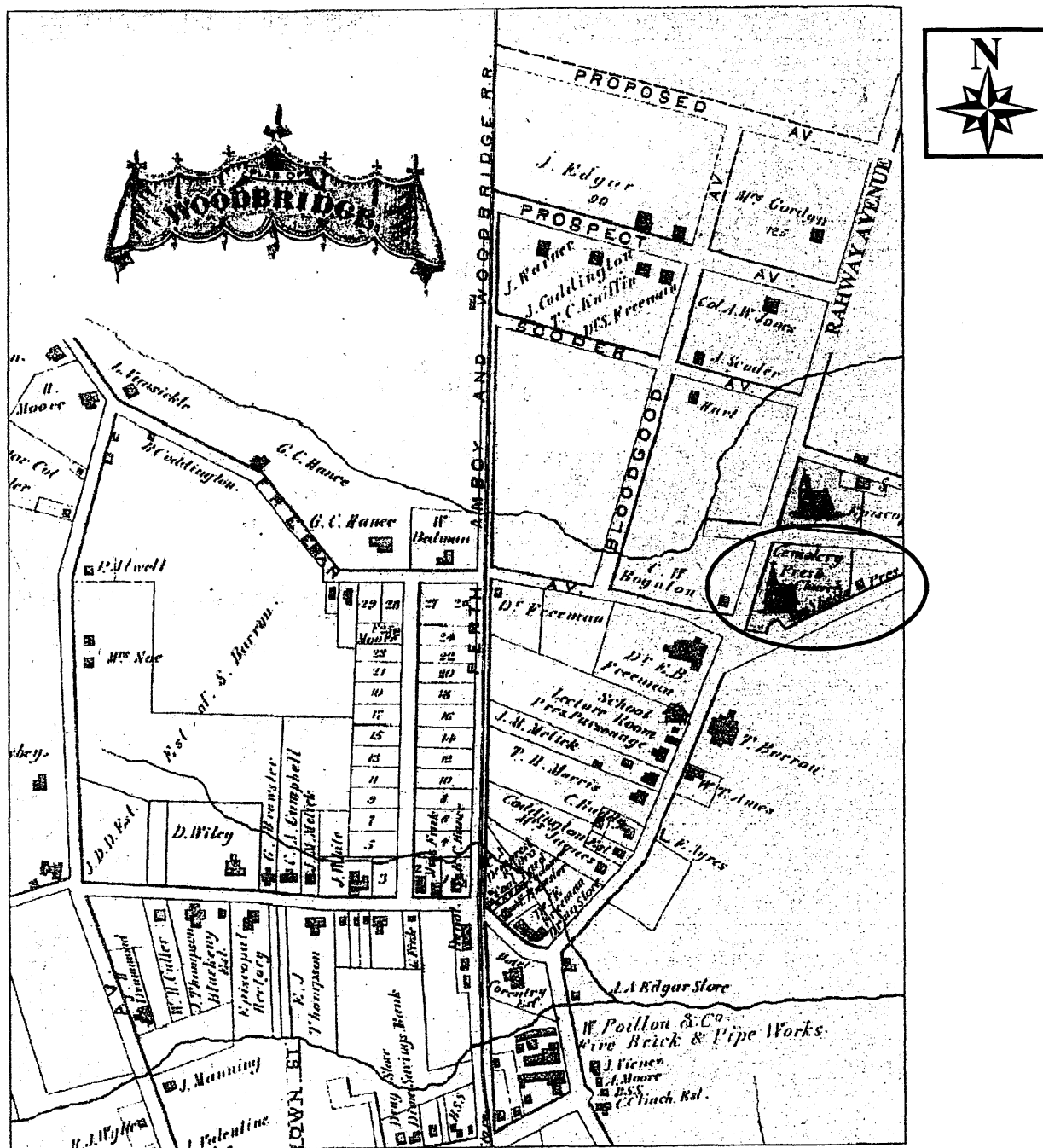
Survey of the old "Kirk Green," August 28, 1784.

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1876 "Plan of Woodbridge." Reprinted in *Images of America: Woodbridge, Volume II.*

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Meeting House 1675

Undated sketch of the first meeting house as it  
appeared in 1675.

*From History - First Presbyterian Church,  
Woodbridge, New Jersey: 300<sup>th</sup> Anniversary,  
May 25, 1975: 1675-1975.*



Undated photograph of the current church building,  
constructed in 1803. This view shows the church  
prior to the 1875 renovations.

*From History - First Presbyterian Church,  
Woodbridge, New Jersey: 300<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, May  
25, 1975: 1675-1975.*

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

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First Presbyterian Church and  
Cemetery, Woodbridge  
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New Jersey



1844 sketch of Rahway Avenue with the First Presbyterian  
Church of Woodbridge depicted at center.  
*From Historical Collections of the State of New Jersey.*

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

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First Presbyterian Church and  
Cemetery, Woodbridge  
Township, Middlesex County,  
New Jersey



Undated photograph of the current church building after the 1875 renovations.  
From *History - First Presbyterian Church, Woodbridge, New Jersey: 300<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, May 25, 1975: 1675-1975.*