



## United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE  
1849 C Street, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20240

The attached property, the Lewes Presbyterian Church, in Sussex County, Delaware, reference number 77000394, was listed in the National Register of Historic Places by the Keeper of the National Register on 10/5/1977, as evidenced by the FEDERAL REGISTER/WEEKLY LIST notice of Tuesday, February 7, 1978, Part II, Vol.43, No. 26, page 5185. The attached nomination form is a copy of the original documentation provided to the Keeper at the time of listing.

  
Keeper of the National Register of Historic Places

9/2/2008  
Date

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICENATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

LEWES PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

AND/OR COMMON

**2 LOCATION**

STREET &amp; NUMBER

King's Highway (100 Block)

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Lewes

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

STATE

Delaware

CODE

10

COUNTY

Sussex

CODE

003

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE <input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC ACQUISITION	<input type="checkbox"/> ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

The Corporation of the Lewes Presbyterian Church

STREET &amp; NUMBER

King's Highway (100 Block)

CITY, TOWN

Lewes

STATE

Delaware

VICINITY OF

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Sussex County Court House

STREET &amp; NUMBER

The Circle

CITY, TOWN

Georgetown

STATE

Delaware

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

Delaware Preservation Checklist, Cultural Resource Survey, S-145

DATE

1974

 FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCALDEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

Division of Historical &amp; Cultural Affairs, Hall of Records

CITY, TOWN

Dover

STATE

Delaware

## 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

### DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Lewis Presbyterian Church is a frame meeting house which has been altered several times since it was built in 1632. (See Diagram I). The church consists of four main sections: the tower and vestibule (a), the sanctuary (b), the chancel (c), and the Sunday school rooms (d). (See Diagram II)

#### Original Building

As originally constructed in 1832, the church was a rectangular frame meeting house, measuring 45 by 37 feet. The exterior walls were composed of cedar shingles. Today, three of the four original shingled walls remain on the east, north, and south. The sanctuary of the present church (b) is located in this section of the building. The front door, with a large fanlight, remains in place and serves as the entrance to the sanctuary (b) from the vestibule (a). There were three tall rectangular sash windows on the south and north walls of the church. The pitched roof was pedimented on the east and west ends with double sash windows centered in each pediment. The west window is still in place, but is hidden by the later addition of the tower.

On the interior, there were galleries on the north, west, and south walls; the rear or west gallery had a bowed front to accommodate the choir. This gallery is the only one remaining. It retains its original panelling. On the east wall, there was a small railed chancel with a tall pulpit, thirteen steps high, which was later removed. The flat ceiling was undecorated.

#### First Alteration

In 1869, the church was greatly altered by the introduction of features of the Italianate and Gothic styles and by an addition. On the exterior, full-height pilasters were applied over the shingles at each of the four corners. Elaborate brackets over deep skirting board were applied under the eaves at the sides and in the pediment. Pointed arch tops were added to the tall windows in the side walls. Evidence of cutting and patching occasioned by this modification remains.

A small, recessed chancel (c) with Gothic windows, matching those in the sanctuary, was added at the east end. The windows are still in place, but have been blocked by a later addition. The high pulpit was removed and a platform-type pulpit was installed. The flat ceiling of the sanctuary was replaced by a deeply-coved Italianate ceiling, having heavy plaster decorations. A similar ceiling was put in the chancel.

#### Second Alteration

In 1886-1887, another series of alterations was undertaken. The side galleries were taken down, and the 1832 pews were removed. New, curved wooden pews were added. Several of the original pews were saved; they are now in the back gallery. The chancel walls were rebuilt and flared to allow for a wide, flat, chancel arch, supported by massive Corinthian columns.

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On the exterior, a tower and belfry (a) were erected against the west wall of the original building (b), providing a vestibule at entrance level (a). The tower was square on plan with bracketting continuing around its front and sides. New entrance doors with simple Gothic panels were installed. The pent eave was extended around the tower providing a reduction for the next stage, which had louvered triple lancets for ventilation at the level of the old window. On the top stage, the belfry was open and framed with double, pointed lancets on each face. There was a broach spire above.

Subsequent Alterations

Subsequent changes include widening the vestibule by 8 feet on each side and changing the front door to the neo-Georgian style with square panels and a graceful broken pediment. These changes were made in 1931.

In 1947, the open belfry and steeple were taken down and replaced by a closed belfry, each face of which has wide louvered pointed arches, topped by simple pedimental eaves which merge into a short, octagonal steeple.

The church, which represents architectural evolution, faces Kings Highway and is surrounded by the cemetery which dates to the eighteenth century. An iron fence borders the churchyard along Kings Highway. The nominated area encompasses the church and cemetery.

## 6 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW					
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> RELIGION		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799 *	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)		
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION				

\* Cemetery

SPECIFIC DATES	BUILDER/ARCHITECT
1832	Unknown

### STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Lewes Presbyterian Church is significant because it is the earliest remaining structure associated with the Lewes Presbyterian congregation, the second oldest in Delaware. Architecturally, it is important because its structural evolution has not destroyed its integrity. Finally, the churchyard, surrounding the building and included in the nominated area, contains the archaeological remains of the 1727 brick church which stood until 1871. Also, buried in the churchyard are Delawareans who have played an important role in local, state, and national history.

The Presbyterians were first organized in Lewes in 1692 and met in a small frame building, not far from the present church. In 1707, the first meeting house was built on land donated by Thomas Fenwick near the present church. It was used until 1727 when it was replaced by a brick church. The brick church served the congregation until 1832, when the earliest portion of the nominated church was built. After 1832, the brick church was used as a school until it was torn down in 1871. The site of the 1727 building is northeast of the present church.

The 1727 brick church was unusual because of its Flemish bond brickwork with glazed headers. Brick was not a common building material in eighteenth-century Lewes and, therefore, the remains of the church are significant. It was originally a one-story, square meeting house. Two subsequent alterations changed it to a two-story, brick structure having a jerken head roof with a Tudor kick.

Several noted eighteenth-century Presbyterian ministers served the Lewes congregation. The earliest recorded minister was Samuel Davis (1697-1706), an Irish evangelist and surgeon, who owned property to the east of the present church. He was one of the seven founders of the Philadelphia Presbytery, which Frances Makemie formed in 1709. Other eighteenth-century ministers of note included John Thompson (1717-1724), Josias Martin (1734-1743), and Matthew Wilson (1756-1790).

John Thompson was an Irish immigrant who was pastor during the construction of the brick church in 1727. After he left Lewes, he went to Pennsylvania and then to Virginia where he played an active role in the Presbyterian Church there. An author of some note, he published many articles and booklets on church doctrine, including the "Explication of the Shorter Catechism" in 1749.

Josias Martin came to Lewes from Ireland, where he had fled from Scotland because of religious persecution. He was instrumental in arranging the visit of George Whitefield to Lewes in 1733.

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Finally, Matthew Wilson who served the congregation longer than any minister, was an active patriot, physician, educator, and theologian. He was also the progenitor of an outstanding Sussex County family. He was born in Pennsylvania and was educated under Francis Allison at New London Academy, where he later assisted Allison. He was a trustee of the Academy of Newark, which later merged with Newark College to form Delaware College, now the University of Delaware. He contributed many articles on medicine and theology to the Pennsylvania Journal and the American Magazine. He published articles against the Stamp Act and was an active patriot in a strong Tory community. His son, James Patriot Wilson, was first a lawyer and Chancellor Delaware, and then a minister. In the early nineteenth century, he was a minister of Lewes Presbyterian Church and later went to Philadelphia where, for twenty-four years, he was pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Philadelphia. His son, and Matthew Wilson's grandson, James P. Wilson, was also a minister and was President of both Delaware College and Union Theological Seminary.

Lewes Presbyterian Church has had three major alterations since it was completed in 1832. Each alteration has guarded the integrity of the original building, while adding another dimension to its overall appearance. It was originally a rectangular frame meeting house of Greek Revival design. The original church forms the sanctuary of the present church. The original doorway, west gallery, and west window remain in this portion of the church.

In 1869 the church was altered in the Italianate and Gothic styles. A chancel to the east was also added. Full-height pilasters at each of the four exterior corners, wooden brackets under the roof, Gothic windows, and a Gothic chancel window remain from this alteration.

The third major alteration to the original church occurred in 1886-1887 when the present wooden curved pews were added, the chancel walls were altered to accommodate massive Corinthian columns, and a tower and belfry were added to the west of the original church.

During the twentieth century minor alterations have occurred, including the re-modelling of the front door in the neo-Georgian style; however, the nineteenth-century appearance of the church remains.

Buried in the Lewes Presbyterian churchyard are two Delaware governors, Davis Hall and Ebe W. Tunnell; two congressmen, Robert G. Houston and John Wallace Houston; and numerous Revolutionary War veterans and veterans of America's nineteenth and twentieth-century wars. Many of the prominent Lewes families of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries are buried here, including the Russell, Hall, Shankland, White, Waples, and Burton families.

## 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

- Atkins, Elizabeth Russell, History of the United Presbyterian Congregations of Lewes, Coolspring and Indian River Churches, Lewes, 1967.  
 Lewes Presbyterian Church records, Delaware Archives, Hall of Records.  
 Neill, Rev. Edward D., "Matthew Lowher, D. D., of Lewes, Delaware," The Pennsylvania Magazine, vol. 8, 45-55.

## 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY ca. 2 1/2 acres

UTM REFERENCES

A	1,8	4,8,7,8,6,0	4,2,9,1,3,0,0	B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C				D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The Lewes Presbyterian Church is bounded on the west by King's Highway and on the north, east, and south by property lines of the churchyard, but does not include the area around the manse nor the area marked "parcel 2" on the enclosed survey.

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

## 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Samuel C. Russell, Ruling Elder; Sue Fox, Historian

ORGANIZATION

DATE

Lewes Presbyterian Church/Div. of Historical & Cultural Affairs, Hall of Records

STREET & NUMBER

TELEPHONE

R. D. 2, Box 277

CITY OR TOWN

STATE

Lewes

Delaware

## 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE

LOCAL

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

*Lauren [Signature]*

TITLE: Director, Division of Historical & Cultural Affairs DATE 1/21/77

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST:

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

Form No 10-300a  
(Rev 10-74)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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- Powell, Lyman, The History of Education in Delaware, Washington, 1893.
- Scharf, J. Thomas, History of Delaware, two volumes, Philadelphia, 1888.
- "Sketch of Reverend John Thompson," General Reference #276, Delaware  
Archives, Hall of Records, Dover, Delaware.
- Zebley, Frank R., The Churches of Delaware, Wilmington, 1947.



(CAPE HENLOPEN)  
395115E

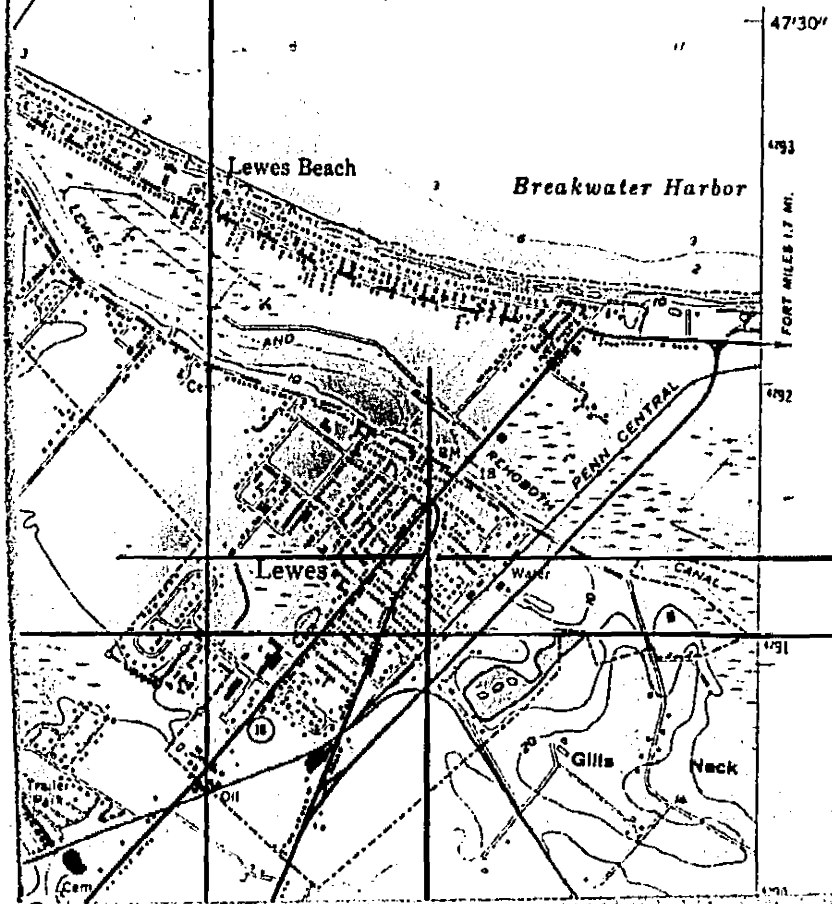
Lewes Presbyterian Church and Cemetery

Lewes, Delaware

UTM Reference:

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South Jetty Light



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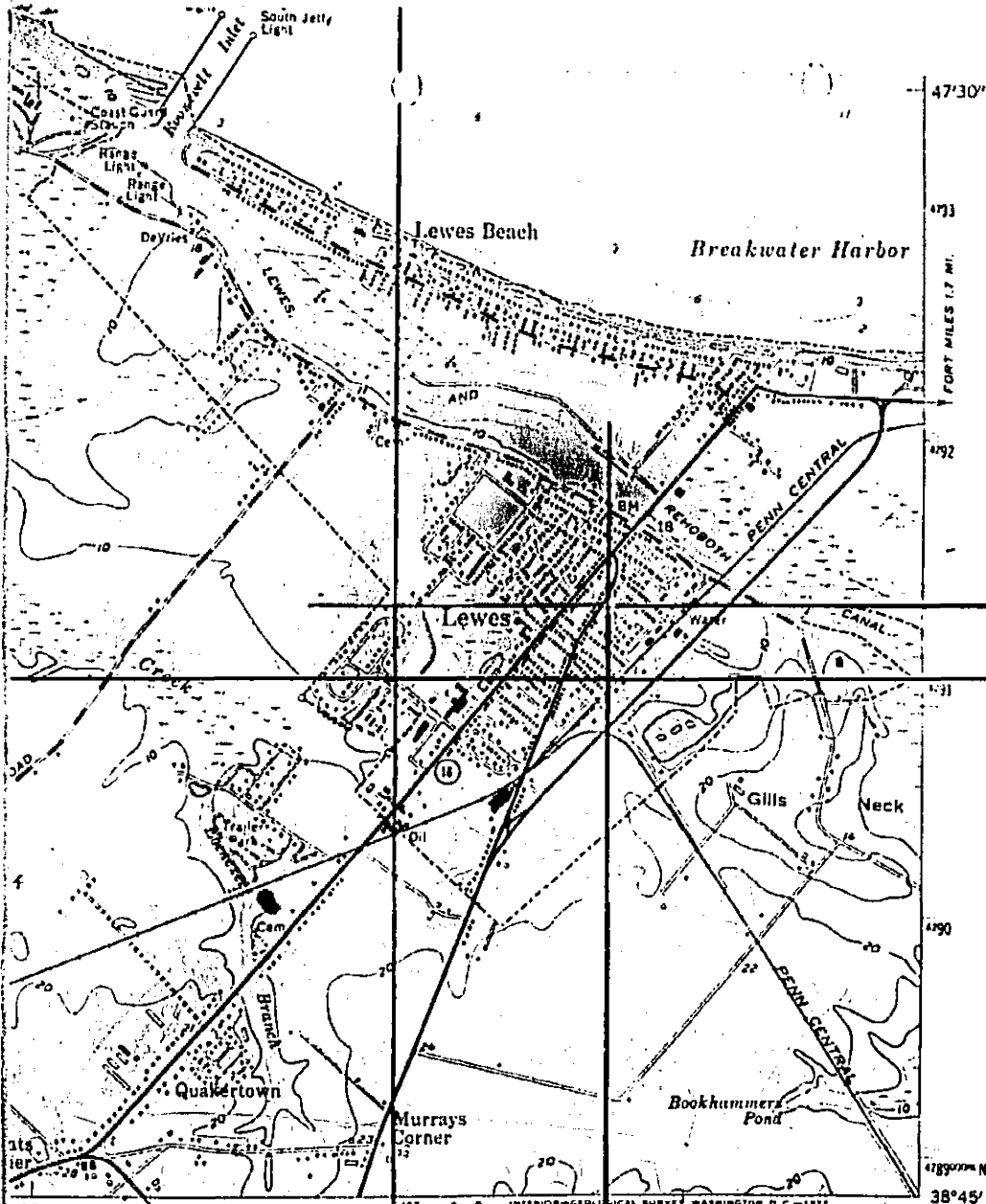
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1.7 MI.

492

18°

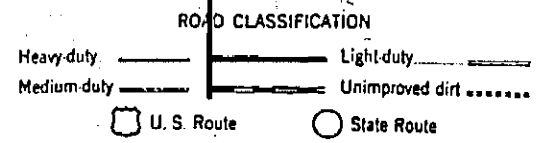
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10' W N 0.6 MI.  
TOWN 12 MI.

MIDWAY 2.3 MI.  
REHOBOTH BEACH 5.4 MI.

INTERIOR-GEODESICAL SURVEY WASHINGTON D.C. - 1912



**LEWES, DEL.**

N3845 - W7507.5/7.5

1954  
PHOTOREVISED 1970  
AMS 5961 I SW-SERIES V832

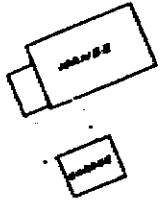
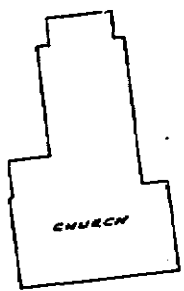
REHOBOTH BEACH  
5961 II NE

PROPERTY OF  
LEWES PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS OFFICE  
SUSSEX COUNTY COURTHOUSE  
GEORGETOWN, DELAWARE



KING'S

STREET (50' WIDE)



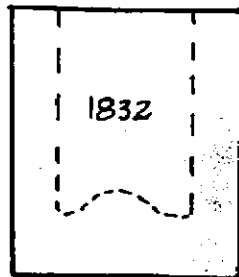
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PARCEL - 2  
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CAROL ANN FABIAN

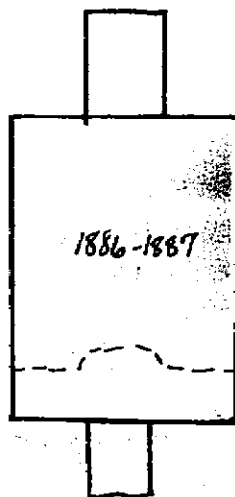
FRANKLIN STREET

CITY of  
LEWES



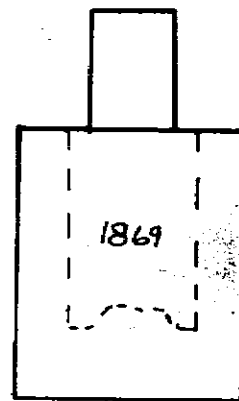
1832

ORIGINAL  
BUILDING  
SHOWING  
GALLERIES



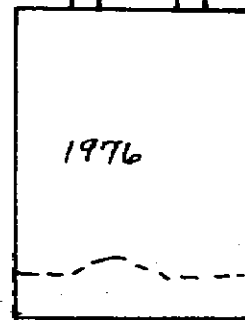
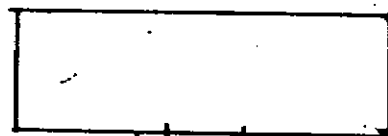
1886-1887

1886-1887 ALTERATIONS  
SHOWING ADDITION OF  
TOWER AND REMOVAL  
OF NORTH AND SOUTH  
GALLERIES



1869

1869 ALTERATIONS  
SHOWING ADDITION  
OF CHANCEL



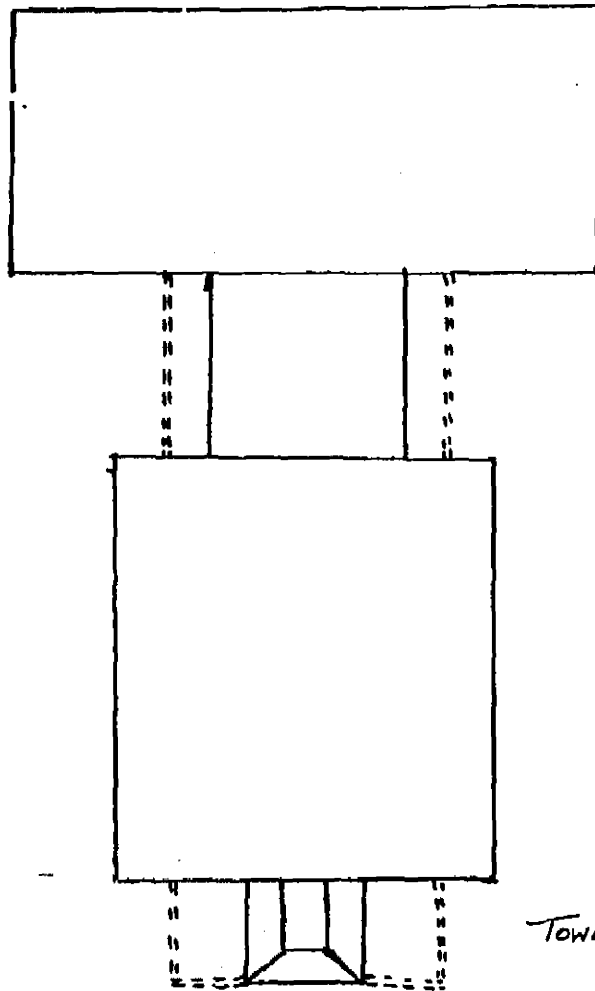
1976

LEWES  
PRESBYTERIAN  
CHURCH

LEWES, DELAWARE

NOT TO SCALE  
1976 SNE

DIAGRAM I



N

SUNDAY SCHOOL ROOMS (1)

CHANCEL (c)

SANCTUARY (o)

TOWER AND VESTIBULE (a)

LEWES  
PRESBYTERIAN  
CHURCH

LEWES, DELAWARE  
NOT TO SCALE  
1976 SNF

DIAGRAM II

ENTRIES IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

STATE DELAWARE

Date Entered OCT 5 1977

<u>Name</u>	<u>Location</u>
Lewes Presbyterian Church	Lewes Sussex County

Also Notified

Hon. William V. Roth, Jr.  
Hon. Joseph R. Biden, Jr.  
Hon. Thomas B. Evans, Jr.

RECEIVED  
ARCHAEOLOGY &  
OCT 13 1977  
HISTORIC  
PRESERVATION

COPY OF CONGRESSIONAL NOTIFICATION