

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY  
NOV 24 1975  
RECEIVED  
DATE ENTERED APR 30 1976

## NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

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

### 1 NAME

HISTORIC

~~\*/~~ First Presbyterian Church  
AND/OR COMMON

### LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

213 Main Street

\_\_NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Clarksville

\_\_ VICINITY OF

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Sixth

STATE

Tennessee

CODE

47

COUNTY

Montgomery

CODE

125

### CLASSIFICATION

#### CATEGORY

- DISTRICT
- BUILDING(S)
- STRUCTURE
- SITE
- OBJECT

#### OWNERSHIP

- PUBLIC
- PRIVATE
- BOTH
- PUBLIC ACQUISITION**
- IN PROCESS
- BEING CONSIDERED

#### STATUS

- OCCUPIED
- UNOCCUPIED
- WORK IN PROGRESS
- ACCESSIBLE**
- YES: RESTRICTED
- YES: UNRESTRICTED
- NO

#### PRESENT USE

- AGRICULTURE
- COMMERICAL
- EDUCATIONAL
- ENTERTAINMENT
- GOVERNMENT
- INDUSTRIAL
- MILITARY
- MUSEUM
- PARK
- PRIVATE RESIDENCE
- RELIGIOUS
- SCIENTIFIC
- TRANSPORTATION
- OTHER:

### OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

First Presbyterian Church

STREET & NUMBER

213 Main Street

CITY, TOWN

Clarksville

\_\_ VICINITY OF

STATE

Tennessee

### LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Montgomery County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

129 North Second Street

CITY, TOWN

Clarksville

STATE

Tennessee

### 6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

DATE

\_\_FEDERAL \_\_STATE \_\_COUNTY \_\_LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

# 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input 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

A large brick structure in the prevailing Gothic revival style of the late nineteenth century. The building is unaltered from its original design, however an addition has been made to the west, the latter having no deleterious effect on the original. The two spires are characteristically asymmetrical, the major one being placed on the corner adjacent to the street intersection. Tasteful pointed arches at doors and windows are supplemented in the composition by a large rose window which is echoed by smaller ones in the bases of the spires, and unusual triangular dormers at the sanctuary roof which, though not of strictly Gothic precedent, do add interest to the overall composition. One other interesting and somewhat disturbing feature is the manner in which the minor, and to a lesser extent the major, spires are set back from the plane of the facade. This serves to subordinate the taller elements to the lower mass of the front wall, and the competition for dominance detracts from the unity of the composition. This is however largely mitigated by a large and handsome rose window which is centered just above the point of the main entrance arch. The exterior is nicely complimented by an ashlar stone retaining wall which extends from the front partway down the hill along the east wall.

*not  
true*

The interior of the church rates as a modest masterpiece of late 19th century "American Gothic" design. In an era long before interior design professionals existed, the builders of this church achieved an amazing harmony and integration of the numerous and diverse elements required to furnish a sanctuary and support a large open structure. Probably the most obvious and striking interior feature is the row of pendant trusses supporting the roof. The peculiar design of these trusses incorporates a suspended coupling of members on either side of the arch which are vaguely reminiscent of stalactites and make the whole structure seemingly defy gravity. The framing of the apse which is large and semi-circular contributes to the pendant effect, in that its arched top is framed by five wooden members which radiate down to the beginning of the arch from a single point at the top. The furnishings, details and stained glass lancet windows contribute to a Gothic air that is almost fantasy-like in its delightful intensity. Though not puritanically Gothic, several other features contribute to the overall charm of the interior. Lighting is furnished by electrified gaslights which are of intricate and delicate design. The warmth provided by the stained glass windows is supplemented by the triangular dormers whose clear tinted panes admit additional rays of soft multi-colored light. The restrained detailing of the interior walls is offset by the powerful wood roof structure whose trusses' massive thrust is countered by exterior brick buttresses. The chancel is flanked on either side by tall slightly recessed panels repeating the shape of the windows. One is filled by a version of the Lord's Prayer in giant painted letters which are reminiscent of the illuminated manuscripts of the Middle Ages. The other more deeply recessed, is filled by the pipes of the organ.

The chancel itself is relatively low, open, and as a result, almost inviting in contrast to frequent design practice of the period. This factor, along with the counterpositioning of light and dark, simple and complex makes for a remarkable interior which inspires awe in the worshipper but is not overbearing or foreboding.

# 8 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 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input checked="" 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		

SPECIFIC DATES 1876

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The pendant trusses, which contribute a great deal to the appearance of the sanctuary, are also unusual enough to rate consideration as an engineering feature. They are rarely found and their appearance is rather intriguing.

In its broadest sense, architecture, in addition to its obvious functions, often serves as a reflection of the society and culture from which it arises. The First Presbyterian Church is an excellent sample of this phenomenon. In the 1880's, Clarksville was a small but thriving center of commercial activity serving the rich tobacco-growing region surrounding it. In few other locales was the rise of the "New South" more rapid. The people who brought this revival about were, if local histories are accurate, industrious citizens who took justifiable pride in their accomplishments. This pride was reflected in their ways of life, their homes and their institutions; the most notable of the latter generally having been the church. It was a major beneficiary of its congregation's new-found wealth. This was probably due in part to a desire to "render unto God the things that were God's" and also to a certain tendency toward ostentation which is a part of human nature. The First Presbyterian Church in Clarksville stands today as a living monument to the optimism and reverence of those people and those times.

The finely executed and preserved interior of the church, while probably not unique in Tennessee, is of such exceptional quality as to be of at least regional significance. In size, attention to detail and consistency, it is without peer in Middle Tennessee.

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Titus, William P., Picturesque Clarksville-Past and Present (Clarksville, 1887).

## 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 1

UTM REFERENCES

A 

1	6
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4	6	7	9	0	0
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VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

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

Charles W. Warterfield

ORGANIZATION

Architect-Engineer Associates

DATE

1/31/75

STREET & NUMBER

Belle Meade Office Park

TELEPHONE

CITY OR TOWN

Nashville

STATE

Tennessee

## 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

*Herbert L. Harper*

TITLE

Executive Director, Tennessee Historical Commission

DATE

11/19/75

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

DATE

4/30/96

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST:

*Charles A. ...*

DATE

4.29.75

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

CLARKSVILLE CHURCHES THEMATIC GROUP NOMINATION  
 ARCHITECTURAL AND HISTORIC PROPERTIES INVENTORY FORM

Site Number 1  
 County Montgomery

Survey Number 1

IDENTIFICATION	Historic name: <u>Presbyterian Church</u>	STATUS	Open to public: Yes ___ No ___ Restricted <u>X</u>
	Common name: <u>First Presbyterian Church</u>		Visible from road: Yes <u>X</u> No ___
	Address: <u>213 Main Street</u> <u>Clarksville, Tennessee</u>		Occupied: Yes <u>X</u> No ___
	Owner's name: <u>First Presbyterian Church</u>		Present use: <u>Church</u>
	Owner's address: <u>213 Main Street</u> <u>Clarksville, Tennessee</u>		Current condition: <u>Excellent</u>
	Classification: <u>Building</u>		Alterations: <u>20th century addition to west side of building</u>
	Tax map reference: <u>66G, Parcel E16</u>		Site features: <u>Ashlar stone retaining wall extends along front of building and partly down its east side</u>
	Acreage: <u>One</u>		
UTM reference: <u>Z16 E 467900</u> <u>N 4042480</u>			
HISTORY	Date of construction: <u>1876</u>	SOURCES	Bibliographical data: <u>Beach, Ursula S. Along the Warioto, Nashville, McQuiddy Press, 1964.</u>
	Architect/builder: <u>Architect Unknown</u>		<u>Titus, William P. Picturesque Clarksville - Past and Present, Clarksville 1887.</u>
	Original or previous owners: <u>Built by the Presbyterian congregation of the 1870's</u>		Form prepared by: <u>Shain T. Dennison</u>
	Original use: <u>Church</u>		Title: <u>Historic Preservation Specialist</u>
	Theme/s: Primary <u>Architecture</u>		Organization: <u>Mid-Cumberland Council of Governments</u>
	Secondary <u>Religion</u>		Date: <u>11/26/80</u>
Other <u>N/A</u>			
DESCRIPTION	<p>The First Presbyterian Church is a large brick ecclesiastical building in the Victorian Gothic style of architecture. It features two bell towers which flank a medium pitched, broad-gabled facade. The towers are offset with the major one, which is topped by a tall spire, located at the east side of the building on the corner adjacent to the street intersection. A large rose window over the central entrance serves as the facade's focal point. Stone is used to contrast with the brick and to highlight structural openings, decorative architectural features and Gothic detailing. Brick stepped buttresses on the east and west side elevations of the building alternate with "Y" tracery Gothic windows.</p>		
SIGNIFICANCE	<p>The First Presbyterian Church gained listing in the National Register in 1976 for its architectural significance as an excellent example of Victorian Gothic ecclesiastical architecture. Its scale, fine Gothic detailing and outstanding interior make it a focal point and landmark in Clarksville.</p>		

MAR 2 1982

PHOTOGRAPHIC DATA

Photographer: Al Raby

Date: November, 1980

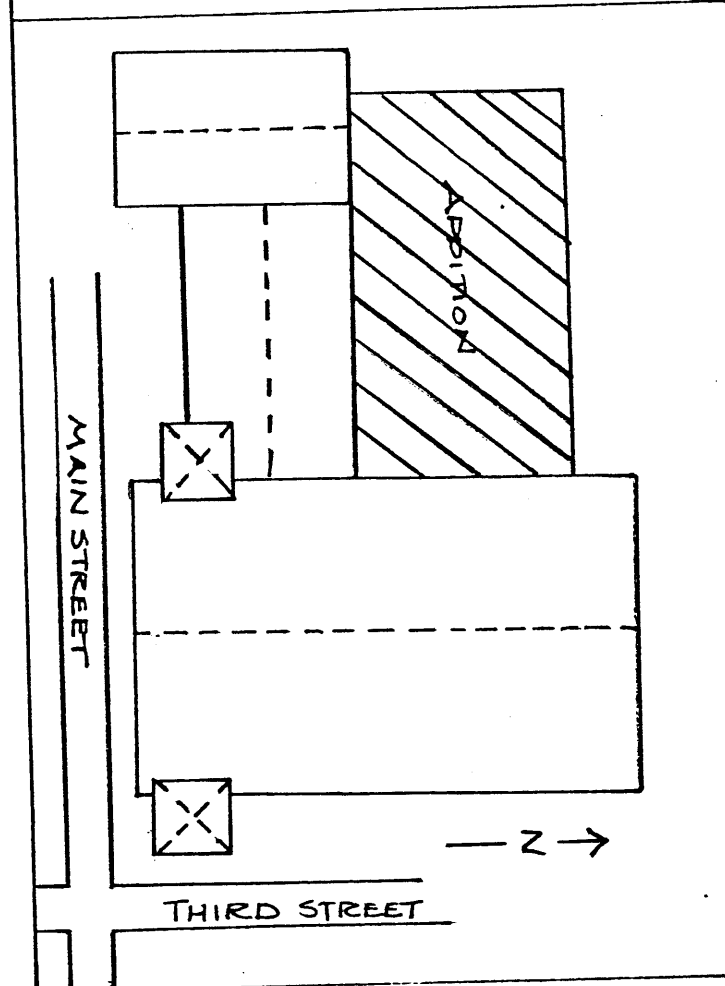
Negatives on file: Mid-Cumberland Council  
of Governments, Nashville

Photographer facing: NE; NW

Photograph number 1-2 of 21 .

CONTINUATION

SITE PLAN - Include North Arrow





NINETEENTH CENTURY CHURCHES IN CLARKSVILLE  
Thematic Group Nomination

- First Presbyterian Church
  - Boundaries
- MAR 2 1982

Scale: 1"=100' Map No. 66G, Parcel E16