

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

NATIONAL
REGISTER

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

1. Name of Property

historic name First Presbyterian Church of Clifton
other names/site number N/A

2. Location

street & number Main Street N/A not for publication
city, town Clifton N/A vicinity
state Tennessee code TN county Wayne code TN181 zip code 38425

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> objects
		<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A
Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register N/A

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

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

Herbert L. Snyder 2/1/88
Signature of certifying official Date
Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer, Tennessee Historical Commission
State or Federal agency and bureau

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

Signature of commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register.
 See continuation sheet.

determined eligible for the National Register. See continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the National Register.

removed from the National Register.

other, (explain:)

Alvin Byer **Entered in the National Register** 3-8-88
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

RELIGION: religious structure

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

RELIGION: religious structure

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

NO STYLE

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation BRICK

walls BRICK

roof METAL: tin

other WOOD: shingle

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The First Presbyterian Church at Clifton, Wayne County, Tennessee, built in 1856, is an excellent example of rural vernacular ecclesiastical architecture. Situated on its original site on Clifton's Main Street, one-half mile south of the town's landing on the Tennessee River, the old brick church retains its basic original appearance and is the principal landmark of the small community. The church is the oldest extant building in the town. The church retains its basic antebellum appearance and also reflects changes from the period immediately after the Civil War, when war damage was repaired, as well as from the 1890s when the church was remodeled slightly and lancet-shaped stained glass windows replaced the earlier tall rectangular windows.

The antebellum church is a one-story rectangular building, three bays by one, built of dark red brick laid in a seven course common bond. The structure rests on a continuous brick foundation and is topped by a shallow-pitched front gable roof of standing seam tin. The main facade, which faces west, features pointed arch entry with a single row of radiating voussoirs in relief and a stained glass transom over the double leaf entrance doors. The exact date of the current entrance is unknown; it replaces an earlier one damaged during the Civil War. The appearance of the original entrance is unknown. A prominent closed gable field, above a wide plain wooden cornice, displays a frame circular vent opening with a quatrefoil motif and a surface of decorative sawtooth shingles.

Above the entry is the building's most distinctive feature, a tall frame bell tower. The tower has a short square base covered with weatherboarding, topped by a concave roof covered with fishscale shingles. Above this is the belfry, a square tower with pointed-arch openings on each side framed with small classical-influence corner boards with small capitals and sun-burst motifs at the corners. Completing the feature is a hexagonal steeple with flared eaves and a simple frame cross at the pinnacle. Like the lower portion, it is sheathed with sawn fishscale shingles.

The north and south sides are three bays wide, with double-hung sash lancet windows with one-over-one-lights of stained glass. These replaced earlier triple-hung sash windows with flat wood beam lintels in 1892. On the south facade, the lower portion of the easternmost window was converted to a door in 1984; it is constructed in materials and design to complement the

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First Presbyterian Church of Clifton

original window architraves. The plain wooden band cornice continues along both sides of the church.

There are two rear brick additions. The first rear addition was built in 1929 and is a side gabled addition that forms a modified T-plan. The 1929 addition has one-over-one double hung windows and a standing seam tin roof. Attached to the rear of the 1929 addition is a 1961 brick addition with a shed roof and one-over-one double hung windows. On the east facade of the 1961 addition, the windows are paired. Single leaf entrances are located on the west and south sides of the additions. Located in the southwest ell formed by the original building and the 1929 addition is a flat roofed canopy with a brick pier and a fishscale shingle frieze. Although the additions extend slightly from the main structure on the north and south sides of the church, they are of smaller scale and are unobtrusive.

The interior of the church follows the common plan of most Protestant churches. There are two rows of oak pews dating from 1892 with a central aisle between; the floor slopes towards the front. A beaded board wainscot covers the walls to a height of approximately three feet. Above a molded cornice is a decorative pressed metal ceiling imported from Great Britain featuring garland and cartouche patterns. The pointed arch stained glass windows added in 1892 are set in rectangular molded wood frames with fluted connecting members and paneled aprons. The chancel area is enclosed by a rood screen of beaded boards with a curtained balustrade above; it contains the altar, pulpit furniture, and freestanding pump organ, also added in 1892. The west end or rear of the sanctuary is distinguished by a balcony covered with grained beaded oak surmounted by a molded cornice. The gallery runs the full width of the church. Two four-paneled swinging doors provide access to a small entry hall below the gallery. This hall has been slightly altered by the addition of restrooms on the north end.

The 1929 Newcomb Addition at the rear of the church contains four rooms off a central hall, accessed from the chancel by a wood and glass panel door. Rooms are for the most part rectangular, with one-over-one-light sash windows and two-paneled doors. One of these rooms, the "Prophet's Chamber" at the south end, has been converted to an apartment with a kitchenette. To the north of the Newcomb Addition are several modern classrooms of contemporary design, added in 1961; these additions form a separate section and do not intrude on the historic structure. The exterior of the Church retains its antebellum appearance, except for the area immediately surrounding the entry, repaired after the Civil War, while the interior reflects the period of the church's renovations soon after the war, ending with the 1890s, when the present windows were installed.

8. Statement of Significance

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

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria A B C D

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

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1856, 1892

Significant Dates

1856, 1892

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Unknown

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

The First Presbyterian Church at Clifton, Wayne County, Tennessee is nominated under National Register criterion C for its outstanding significance to Clifton and Wayne County in architecture. The ca. 1856 church is the oldest surviving building in the historic Tennessee River town of Clifton, once a major river port. The dark red brick building is the largest in the community and is distinguished by graceful stained glass lancet windows, a decorative wooden bell tower centered over the front, and ornamental brick cornice. The striking interior features a raised chancel area with an 1892 pulpit and altar furniture, wainscoted walls, and an interesting rear balcony, said by church members to have been used by slaves of members of the congregation; much of the interior woodwork features original decorative faux graining. Although additions have been made to the rear of the church, the main nineteenth century church building is little altered.

The early history of the church is difficult to reconstruct, as the earliest records were destroyed in a fire at the home of a church member. However, notes on the second set of records indicate that the church was organized in August 1854 by Cumberland Presbyterian minister Rev. John F. Walker. The original fifteen members elected John Hughes and Joseph Dowdy as ruling elders. The membership increased by eight between 1855 and 1856, and two additional elders were elected.

The church was built around this time. The note in the reconstructed church records states that the bricks were burned and the building constructed by Jasper Hale, the son-in-law of the minister at the time, the Rev. John Hudson. Other records indicate that the church may have been constructed by John Hughes.

In 1859 the church was received in the Richland Presbytery of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church. At the time, the church services were reported as being received "with good interest and enthusiasm."

9. Major Bibliographical References

Church Records, First Presbyterian Church of Clifton.

The American Presbyterian/Reformed Historical Sites Registry. Presbyterian Historical Society.

Killebrew, J. B. Introduction to the Resources of Tennessee. Nashville, 1894.

Pruitt, Wade. Bugger Saga: The Civil War Story of Guerrilla and Bushwacker Warfare in Lauderdale County Alabama and Southern Middle Tennessee. Columbia, Tennessee: P-Vine Press, n.d.

Montaque, Virginia. Interview, May 1987.

See continuation sheet

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 # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acres of property less than one acre

UTM References

A

1	6	4	0	9	7	0	0
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3	9	1	5	9	5	0
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Zone Easting Northing

B

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Zone Easting Northing

C

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D

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Verbal Boundary Description

The nominated area for the First Presbyterian Church of Clifton is roughly rectangular in shape, bounded on the west by Main Street and on the north, east, and south by adjacent property lines, as shown on the accompanying Wayne County tax map, scale 1" = 100'.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The nominated area includes sufficient property to protect the architectural and historical integrity of the First Presbyterian Church of Clifton.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Richard Quin, Historic Preservation Planner & Miranda Roche, Historic Preservation
organization South Central Tennessee Development District date December 1986 Staff
street & number Post Office Box 1346 telephone 615-381-2046
city or town Columbia state Tennessee zip code 38402-1346

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First Presbyterian Church of Clifton

The church building was severely damaged during the Civil War. In 1863, the Second Tennessee Mounted Infantry, U.S.A., was organized from residents of Wayne, Hardin, and adjoining counties. These Union sympathizers were stationed at Clifton in order to keep Confederate cavalry, under Nathan Bedford Forrest, from crossing the Tennessee River and raiding West Tennessee. As the regiment was placed on their own home ground, they knew the lay of the land, and soon reverted to foraging, black market dealings, torture, hangings, murders, etc. Very little appears in the official records or elsewhere about this unit, except that a report of the Adjutant General, State of Tennessee, listed 902 men on the rolls of whom 116 deserted.²

The regiment was garrisoned at Clifton, and camped on the hillside behind the church. According to a report in the Clifton Mirror in 1906, the church was supposedly used as a blacksmith shop and livery stable; at this time the front or west wall was largely pulled down to provide access for the horses.³ Other damage may have occurred during the naval bombardment of the town in 1864. By the end of the war, most of the community had been desolated.

Soon after the war, the church was repaired and services resumed; the interior was restored in 1867. In 1869, church membership reached its peak, with 69 members recorded on the rolls. The church filed a \$1,500 claim for damages against the U. S. Government after the War and in 1906 received \$980.00. Another account states that the church received \$784 in 1915.

In 1892 the original rectangular clear glass windows were replaced by the extant lancet arched stained glass windows. Although the rectangular opening was bricked up on the exterior, its original form can still be seen. The rectangular form was retained on the interior. The pews and pulpit furniture that remain in the church date from this remodeling.

In 1905, as part of a large scale reunion of Presbyterian factions, the church merged with the Presbyterian Church, U.S.A., as part of the West Tennessee Presbytery. In 1907 R. S. Tinner, a member of the congregation, entered the ministry, the only member of the church ever to be ordained. A one-story Sunday School wing was built on the rear of the church in 1929, largely due to a bequest by a member of the church, Fannie Hughes Newcomb. A second, smaller Sunday School wing, set off to the rear of the 1929 Newcomb addition, was added in 1961; at the same time, a kitchen was added, and a study converted to an apartment for the minister.

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First Presbyterian Church of Clifton

The church is the oldest church in Clifton, and indeed was the only church in town as late as 1874.⁴ In 1979, the church received the designation of "American Presbyterian and Reformed Historic Site #191" by the Presbyterian Historical Society for its significance as the oldest building in town, one of the two oldest in Wayne County, and as one of the oldest churches in the Presbytery of Middle Tennessee, PCUSA.

Architecturally, the church is a rare example of antebellum period brick construction in the sparsely-settled county. The church is the oldest extant building in the city of Clifton. Most of the other structures from this period were destroyed during the Civil War when the town was literally devastated through a combination of the naval bombardment, arson, and virulent bushwacker activity. In the entire county, only one other nineteenth century church bears any similarity. The Waynesboro Cumberland Presbyterian Church, constructed in 1850, is laid out on a similar rectangular plan and is a brick building topped by a decorative belfry. The Waynesboro Church differs by having a second floor, once used as a Masonic Hall. The interior of the Waynesboro Church is not as highly detailed as the church at Clifton, with its stained glass memorial windows and 1892 altar furniture, and raised balcony at the rear. The church at Clifton is the largest building in the community, an imposing structure that serves to mark the east end of the city's two-block downtown district.

Although the church has undergone changes over a period of years, it has retained its basic integrity of form as an antebellum church. The alterations that occurred over time are reflective of the repairs that were necessary after the Civil War and of late nineteenth century remodeling. The church is important as an example of an early nineteenth century church with late nineteenth century alterations.

FOOTNOTES

¹ This is somewhat hard to believe, as Wayne County in the mid-nineteenth century had very few slaveholders, the rough hill country around Clifton being wholly unsuited for plantation agriculture.

² See Wade Pruitt (Dr. Maurice Pruitt), Bugger Saga: The Civil War Story of Guerrilla and Bushwacker Warfare in Lauderdale County, Alabama and Southern Middle Tennessee. Columbia, Tennessee: P-Vine Press. n.d.

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³ Irritated Unionists still living in the county quickly denied this and told the editor of the Mirror that the church was used only as a hospital.

⁴ J. B. Killebrew, Introduction to the Resources of Tennessee.
Nashville, 1874.

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First Presbyterian Church of Clifton

First Presbyterian Church of Clifton
Main Street
Clifton, Wayne County, Tennessee
Photo By: Miranda T. Roche
Date: August 1987
Neg: Tennessee Historical Commission
Nashville, Tennessee

Facing southeast, north and west facade.
#1 of 8

Facing east, west facade.
#2 of 8

Facing southwest, north facade.
#3 of 8

Facing west, east facade.
#4 of 8

Interior, facing altar.
#5 of 8

Interior, facing rear.
#6 of 8

Interior, facing northeast.
#7 of 8

Interior, detail of altar.
#8 of 8

