

First Presbyterian Church Cemetery
Name of Property

Knox County, TN
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 count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
		buildings
1		sites
		structures
		objects
1	0	Total

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

Hist & Arch Resources of Knoxville & Knox Co., TN

Number of Contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

FUNERARY: cemetery

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

FUNERARY: cemetery

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

N/A

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation N/A
walls N/A

roof N/A
other STONE, METAL

Narrative Description

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

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

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

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

Criteria Considerations

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

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** moved from its original location.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property
- G** less than 50 year 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): N/A

- 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)

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

SETTLEMENT

Period of Significance

Ca. 1795 - 1857

Significant Dates

N/A

Significant Person

(complete if Criterion B is marked)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

N/A

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State Agency
- Federal Agency
- Local Government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

Knoxville-Knox Co. Metropolitan Planning Commission

First Presbyterian Church Cemetery
Name of Property

Knox Co., TN
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of Property .92 acres

UTM References

(place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

Knoxville, TN 147NW

1 17 236580 3983240
Zone Easting Northing

2 _____

3 _____
Zone Easting Northing

4 _____

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Jane Gaither, Intern & Ann K. Bennett, Senior Planner
organization Knoxville-Knox County Metropolitan Planning Commission date May 1994
street & number 403 City County Building 400 Main Street telephone 423-521-2500
city or town Knoxville state TN zip code 37902

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

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name First Presbyterian Church, c/o F. H. Pittenger
street & number 620 State Street telephone 423-546-2531
city or town Knoxville state TN zip code 37902

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 listing. 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 20303.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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First Presbyterian Church Cemetery
Knox County, TN

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

On the corner of State Street and Clinch Avenue in downtown Knoxville, adjacent to First Presbyterian Church, is the cemetery associated with the church and established when the town was founded. The First Presbyterian Church Cemetery is designed in the typical church graveyard fashion with graves placed close together in narrow rows stretching the entire width of the graveyard. The current fencing is wrought iron and rests on a low stone wall. The fencing is approximately three feet high.

The cemetery, comprised of one acre of land, is fronted by State Street and is bordered by Clinch Street. It is located adjacent to the First Presbyterian Church. Although the oldest tombstone inscription bears the death date of 1800, deaths had occurred in Knoxville after its settlement in 1786 and the cemetery is known to have been a burying ground as early as 1795 when the surrounding land was subdivided into plots for their eventual sale.

The terrain of the cemetery slopes to the east, where First Creek, the original eastern boundary of Knoxville, is located. The original view to the east was across First Creek to an area of wilderness when First Presbyterian Church Cemetery was established. The tombstones types and designs reflect the age of the cemetery. They are primarily upright rectangular stone slabs, with minimal engraving, covered with lichens and moss. Many of the tombstones cannot be read because of the deterioration and exposure to which they have been subject. There are a few slate markers without any sign of inscription. The graves are not ordered in any fashion and family graves are not necessarily grouped together. The exception to the order of the graves placements occurs with the burial of many of the prominent residents close to the church, as was the tradition of the time. Many large trees occupy the site.

By 1852, approximately sixty years after its founding, the graveyard reached its capacity. Compounding the problem of a full cemetery was the desire of the First Presbyterian Church to expand its facilities. The church could not expand unless the building encroached onto the graveyard. The solution to the problem of church expansion resulted in the graves of General James White and Colonel John Williams being interred in the walls of the church. Access to these graves for those wishing to visit them was made possible through a door in the church basement which led to the wall with a constructed panel on the north side of the church. This panel was engraved with the names of those buried within the walls.

In 1857 a Knoxville City Ordinance prohibited further interments in the First Presbyterian Church Cemetery. The cemetery's over crowded conditions led to complaints about its contribution to unsanitary conditions in the city. Around the same time Gray Cemetery (also known as Old Gray), located about two miles from the center of Knoxville, was established. There were a few interments in the First Presbyterian Church Cemetery after 1857.

The appearance of the cemetery was changed slightly after the Civil War when fencing was put in place to protect the cemetery and to repair the damage that occurred during the war years. The current metal fence was probably not the one installed then, but its stone base appears to have remained the same. Other changes occurred in 1924, when changes occurred to the First Presbyterian Church Building, including enlarging the building. Some graves were relocated to other areas of the cemetery or moved to other cemeteries at that time. The exact number of graves moved at that time is not known. Overall, however, the changes to First Presbyterian Church Cemetery have been few, so that the First Presbyterian Church Cemetery is fairly much frozen in the pre-Civil War era.

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First Presbyterian Church Cemetery
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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

First Presbyterian Church Cemetery is being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under criterion A for its significance in early settlement history in Knoxville, and under criterion C for its representation of early cemetery landscape. First Presbyterian Church Cemetery is an excellent example of the form followed by Colonial burying grounds, located in churchyards with graves arranged in rows and without system except for placing the most prominent graves nearest the church. Fencing was located around the perimeter of these cemeteries, and landscape was non-existent or consisted only of naturally occurring trees or bushes. First Presbyterian Church Cemetery was affected by emphasis on rural cemeteries which occurred on a national level, and was the subject of public health concerns, as they developed nationally, and was superseded by Gray Cemetery (known as Old Gray) which was developed as a garden cemetery exemplifying those national trends.

The town of Knoxville, established in 1791, preceded the designation of the area's first graveyard by one year. James White, the owner of much of present day downtown Knoxville, set apart one acre of ground near his residence so as to provide a burial area for the community. The First Presbyterian Church was later established next to the cemetery on its southwest corner and had an active congregation as early as 1793.

In addition to exemplifying the prevailing thought about cemeteries nationally, and reflecting the history of early cemeteries, First Presbyterian Church Cemetery is the site of burial of most of Knoxville's earliest prominent settlers. The graveyard at First Presbyterian was considered a significant historic site as early as June 15, 1850, when an article appeared in the Knoxville *Register* stating that

. . . in walking through the First Presbyterian Churchyard we have mentioned, the visitor will be struck with the great number of graves that it contains, and he will see too that there is scarcely a family of the town that has not its representative there.

The article continued by citing the historic value of the cemetery where historic figures such as Governor William Blount were buried. Other examples of noteworthy early Knoxvillians who are buried here include James White, known as the founder of Knoxville. Reverend Samuel Carrick, the first pastor of First Presbyterian Church and later president of Blount College is buried in First Presbyterian Church Cemetery. The Honorable Hugh Lawson White, known as "the just", is also interred at First Presbyterian Church Cemetery; White was Knoxville's only Presidential candidate, and carried Tennessee and Georgia in 1836.

First Presbyterian Church Cemetery, particularly during the Civil War, suffered local manifestations of national conflict. The base of the current wrought iron fencing was probably installed after the Civil War as part of a cleaning and repair of the cemetery, which had served as a disposal site for trash and as a campsite. The upper fencing was probably added around 1924 when the church expanded and moved some of the graves.

First Presbyterian Church Cemetery, despite changes that have occurred over time, retains its prominence and unique design characteristics. It continues to remind observers of the time when attitudes toward death and cemeteries were different than they are today. It remains an oasis of green and solitude in twentieth century Knoxville, creating thoughts of a time when the area surrounding it was residential and the views from it were of wilderness and recently settled homesites.

The cemetery meets the requirements for eligibility as set forth in the multiple property form Historic and Architectural Resources of Knoxville and Knox County, Tennessee in the context of *Cemeteries and Gardens, 1785 - 1940*.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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First Presbyterian Church Cemetery
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BIBLIOGRAPHY

First Presbyterian Church Records

Pittenger, F. H. Personal Interview.

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First Presbyterian Church Cemetery
Knox County, TN

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Beginning at the southwest corner of the intersection of Clinch Street and State Street; thence northwesterly 144.8 feet to a point; thence northeasterly 145.4 feet to a point; thence southeasterly along the First Presbyterian Church wall approximately 94 feet thence southwesterly 60 feet along the First Presbyterian Church wall, thence southeasterly 58 feet along the church wall to a point at the right of way of State Street; thence southwesterly 92 feet to the point of beginning, located on CLT Map. No. 95, lot D-6, Knox County Records.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The land included in this nomination encompasses the boundaries of the First Presbyterian Church Cemetery, exclusive of the church.

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First Presbyterian Church Cemetery
Knox County, TN

PHOTOGRAPHS

First Presbyterian Church Cemetery
620 State Street
Knox County, Tennessee
Tennessee Historical Commission
Ann K. Bennett
August 1, 1994

East side of State Street, facing northwest
#1

August 1, 1994
Facing north on east side of State Street
#2

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