

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number \_\_\_\_\_ Page \_\_\_\_\_

### SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD

NRIS Reference Number: 89000994

Date Listed: 07/28/89

Christ Episcopal Church  
Property Name

Middlesex  
County

New Jersey  
State

Multiple Name

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This property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places in accordance with the attached nomination documentation subject to the following exceptions, exclusions, or amendments, notwithstanding the National Park Service certification included in the nomination documentation.

  
Signature of the Keeper

July 28, 1989  
Date of Action

=====  
Amended Items in Nomination:

Criterion consideration A should be checked since property is a religious property.

DISTRIBUTION:

- National Register property file
- Nominating Authority (without nomination attachment)

994

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

JUN 29 1989

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 Christ Episcopal Church  
other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_

2. Location

street & number 5 Paterson Street  NA not for publication  
city, town New Brunswick  vicinity  
state New Jersey code 034 county Middlesex code 023 zip code 08903

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>5</u>	_____ buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	<u>1</u>	_____ sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<u>2</u>	_____ structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	_____	_____ objects
		<u>8</u>	_____ Total

Name of related multiple property listing: NA

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

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.

[Signature] Date 6/26/89  
Signature of certifying official  
Assistant Commissioner for Natural & Historic Resources/DSHPO  
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:)

[Signature] 7/28/89  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

## 6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Religion /religious structure

Religion /church school

Religion/ church-related residence

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Religion /religious structure

Religion/church school

Religion/church-related residence

## 7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

Gothic Revival

Federal style

Romanesque Revival

Italianate

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation stone

walls stone

roof copper

other

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

Christ Church is a one story structure, rectangular in plan with a five-sided apse added to the east and a tower to the west end. The main entry is in the north-facing gable end, through a double-leaf arched door at the base of the projecting tower. Flanking the front entry are large bronze memorial tablets, installed in 1915.

The church is constructed of regularly sized coursed sandstone rubble, while the stone tower is composed of irregularly sized shaley sandstone rubble. Some later additions to the church were also done in similar sandstone, harmonizing with the original masonry. The present building is said to contain stones reused from the first, 18th-century structure.

In 1852, after nearly a century of service, the old church was taken down (although the steeple tower was left standing) and a new stone building completed by the following year according to plans by the New York architectural firm of Wills and Dudley. The old tower was rejoined to the church with large metal tie rods, the ends of which are visible on the exterior.

The tall flat-roofed square tower dates to 1803. The classically detailed steeple above has an octagonal base containing round-arched openings covered with blinds. The tower is completed by a copper-clad spire. The steep gable roof of the church is covered with slate shingles. A simple molded cornice with modillions runs beneath it.

Rubbed brownstone blocks trim the paired Romanesque round-arched windows. Wooden colonettes frame the windows and vertically divide the narrow arched lights. The windows are separated by nearly vertical ornamental stone buttresses. These small buttresses, arched windows, and the rear apse, while modest compared to some elaborate examples of Gothic Revival architecture, do combine to create an appearance of an old English parish church.

While the existence of a classically detailed tower may have inhibited a lavish use of Gothic Revival motifs on the exterior of the church, the interior displays a fully developed use of the style. The barrel-vaulted ceiling of the nave rests on ten hammer braces, from eight of which hang lanterns. The center-aisle nave is separated from the apsidal altar by an elaborate iron rood screen.

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The stained glass in the round-arched windows is clearly visible from the interior; one window bears the maker's name, "The Bavarian Art Institute".

In the vestibule, a wooden spindled stair rises to the organ loft, which is filled by a large pipe organ in a round-arched case. The church's original flooring, of dark-stained diagonally laid narrow boards, is still visible only under the pews. In other places it has been covered with modern tile.

Both the round arched forms of the rood screen, and the pedimented window surround behind the altar suggest neoclassical taste reworking the Gothic Revival intentions of the architects. A small polygonal chapel to the north of the sanctuary is detailed with Neoclassical elements, and appears to be roughly the contemporary of the altar redecoration. The walls of the church are presently plain painted plaster, and it is unknown whether this too is a modification in Neoclassical taste over painted polychromatic decoration.

The Christ Church property is surrounded on the west side by a high brick wall, and entered on both the Church Street and Paterson Street sides by ornate wrought iron gates from the early 20th century. A simple pointed iron fence encloses the church property on the south and west sides. It was made by the Fili Carpenter Iron Work Co., of New York City.

The choir house was constructed about 1874 in a sophisticated display of brickwork combining Italianate and Gothic Revival motifs in a building which reflects the strong influence of the English Victorian Gothic movement. The verticality of the two-and-a-half story building is emphasized by the projecting two-story pilaster arcade framing each of the facade's five bays. The building has a corbeled brick cornice and a brick relief pattern trefoil in the peaked gable which accents the center bay. The round-arched sash windows of the choir house are complemented by a round or rose window in the attic gable, and a pointed arch window in the center bay. The building originally faced the western side of the church across open space; in 1923 the choir house and church were connected by a one-story cloister. The cloister matches the church rather than the choir house in its use of stone and slate, but its detailing is simplified neoclassical rather than Gothic Revival.

A generation later the parish house was constructed in the then-popular Romanesque Revival style. Brick was also chosen for this structure, which is a shallow Greek Cross in plan, under a steep hipped roof. The terra cotta cornice molding in an egg and dart motif survives, although the frieze of the building is new stuccoed and seems to be missing original terra cotta or tile ornamentation.

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The roof is shingled in round-edged slate, and edged with copper-clad coping and recessed gutters. The arched windows are grouped in twos or threes with stone lintels. The parish house was extensively renovated in 1930 (primarily in the inside) to accommodate offices, classrooms, and bathrooms. At that time it was connected to the choir house with a rather awkward addition containing a Colonial Revival style doorway. Markings on the exterior brick walls, particularly visible on the south side of the parish house suggest that an original porch or portico was removed.

The sexton house, an Italianate style townhouse along Paterson Street, is three stories tall, with the low pitch roof, extended eaves, and bracketed cornice characteristic of the style. Two-over-two sash windows are under bracketed window moldings, pedimented on the third floor. The house is three bays to the street side, although it has no entry here, but rather is approached from a porch (now screened) on the west side of the building facing the churchyard. A frame addition connects the sexton house to the rear of the choir house. The sexton house is painted in colors complementary to its architecture.

Although containing many stylistically disparate buildings, the entire Christ Church complex is visually unified by the spire of the church, visible from nearly every angle on the property.

## 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 NA

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Period of Significance

1803-1897

Significant Dates

1803

1852

1874

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

None

Architect/Builder

Wills & Dudley, architects

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

The Christ Church complex, bounded by Church Street, Nielson Street, and Paterson Street, contains the 1852 vernacular Gothic Revival style church; the Choir House in a combination of Italianate/Gothic style; the Parish House, a Romanesque Style structure of 1897; and the Sexton's House, an Italianate style frame townhouse. The church itself turns its back on Nielson Street, and it is set within a churchyard containing several trees and simple markers from 18th and 19th century burials. The first church erected on the site was completed about 1743, and one of the first missionaries to the church was The Rev. Samuel Seabury Jr., who later became the first bishop of the Episcopal Church in the United States. The church was rebuilt in the Gothic Revival style in 1852 to designs by the architects Wills & Dudley.

Congregational records for Christ Church only exist back to 1790, although the church was established about a half century before that. The records of the colonial era of Christ Church, as with other Episcopal churches in America, are part of the records of the missionary arm of the English church. The Church of England congregants in New Brunswick built a church and committed themselves to a yearly sum for a salary before they petitioned the English Society for the Propagation of the Gospel for a minister to serve them in 1744. Prior to that time, they attended St. James' Church in Piscataway, but the growth of New Brunswick encouraged the creation of a separate church.

Until after the Revolution, the churches in America had no leaders in this country, and churches were supplied with "missionaries" from the English church. Americans entering the ministry were required to go to England for examination and ordination, a lengthy and expensive process. One of the first missionaries to the new church at New Brunswick was the young American-born Rev. Samuel Seabury Jr. He was well-liked, and very talented as both a preacher and a physician, but he left New Brunswick for other assignments after only two years at his post with Christ Church. Nevertheless, he was fondly recalled in the community, and it was with pride that his former congregation saw him appointed the first bishop of the Episcopal Church in the United States in 1785. There was

See continuation sheet

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

(see continuation sheet)

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 # NJ-38
- 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:

Office of New Jersey Heritage, Trenton  
Library of Congress (HABS)

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreage of property 1.1 New Brunswick Quad

UTM References

A 

1	8
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5	4	7	1	6	0
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4	4	8	2	7	0	0
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Zone Easting Northing

C 

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B 

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Zone Easting Northing

D 

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See continuation sheet

**Verbal Boundary Description**

(see attached map)

The nominated property consists of parcels designated as Block 10, Lots 1,2,3, 12, and 13 of the City of New Brunswick Tax Map.

See continuation sheet

**Boundary Justification**

The nominated property, bounded by Church, Neilson, and Paterson streets, is the land historically associated with the Christ Episcopal Church and still under church ownership.

See continuation sheet

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Janet W. Foster  
organization ACROTHERION, inc. date January 1987  
street & number 71 Maple Avenue telephone (201) 984-9660  
city or town Morristown state NJ zip code 07960

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much interest in the New Brunswick congregation in establishing a politically separate Episcopal Church after the Revolution, and in 1784 at Christ Church the Rev. Alfred Beach held a general meeting from which came the organization of the Episcopal Church in the United States of America.

After working so hard to establish themselves as independent of the "Church of England", American Episcopalians were caught up in the church-wide Ecclesiological movement of the 1830's through 50's which popularized the archaeologically correct English medieval parish church as the proper setting for worship. The movement melded religious conviction with architectural taste, with the result that nearly every Episcopal Church of the mid-19th century was built in or remodeled on the Gothic Revival style. In the case of Christ Church, the church was rebuilt, using some of the stone from the original, much-loved colonial building.

The site of the church had been leased to the congregation for 2000 years by property owner Philip French in 1745, for a fee of one peppercorn per annum. The congregation received a charter from King George III in 1761. Their church was the first in New Brunswick to be built on the longitudinal plan rather than the meeting house plan of the other Protestant denominations. Although progressive in plan, in the use of a gambrel roof, and the construction of a large Palladian window in the rear wall, the church was by no means anything more than a vernacular interpretation of Georgian classicism, built by local and anonymous craftsmen.

The church tower was added in 1773, and it has a history quite independent of the church building. The two-stage steeple is a simplified interpretation of the steeple of St. Martin-in-the-Fields in London. It was the highest point in town when constructed and this may have attracted the lightning bolt which in 1803 caused it to be burned it to the ground. It was rebuilt that same year along the same lines.

Perhaps in response to the brand new Dutch Reformed Church of 1812 one block away, or simply from a need to accommodate new furnishings, Christ Church was completely remodeled in 1814. However, this did not prove adequate for more than a generation, and in the early 1850's, the congregation began to plan a new church, larger and more stylish. For the job, they called in the architectural firm of Wills and Dudley.

Wills and Dudley of New York were well-known church architects, proficient in the form and details of the Gothic Revival style, particularly as espoused by

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the Ecclesiological movement. Frank Wills was an English trained architect, who began his practice in this country in 1849. One of his early commissions was St. Peters Episcopal Church in nearby Spotswood, New Jersey.

"Wills united the best of English mid-19th century thought on Gothic with American practicality", states Pheobe Stanton in The Gothic Revival and American Church Architecture. (Stanton, p. 287). This is demonstrated at Christ Church where the congregation insisted on retaining the existing classical steeple tower. By matching and reusing old stone, the architects were able to blend the stylistically disparate elements of tower and nave into a coherent whole. The architects also struggled with the size and siting of the church, hemmed in on two sides by a cemetery, and the rear of commercial buildings which lined Paterson Street on the other side. The result of these constraints however was a building which was the first example of Gothic Revival architecture in New Brunswick, and remains the finest example of the style in the city.

Christ Church retains ownership of an undated drawing signed "Wills & Dudley" which depicts a transverse of the nave and an elevation of the apse, both of which represent present-day conditions. The church also has two colored renderings by the turn-of-the-century architectural firm of Cram and Ferguson depicting an elaborate series of additions and improvements designed to create a more formal and cohesive churchyard complex. These renderings are also undated, and apparently never carried out, although the demolition around 1880 of the adjacent commercial buildings, so problematical for Wills & Dudley, improved the setting and outlook of the church considerably. In 1912, the iron fence was erected around the church property, and in 1916, the church was renovated, so the Cram and Ferguson project may well date from this era of buildings and grounds improvements.

Alterations to the church continued throughout the decade of the 1920's, beginning in 1920 with the installation of the rood screen. The appearance of Neoclassical features may be attributed to the renovations of this era, when interest in colonial America's art and architecture was high. Two years later, a new altar was put in place; two years after that a new organ was installed in the gallery, and the cloister connecting the church and choir house was built. In 1927, the beloved steeple of the church again burned, and was replaced to match the original.

The Christ Church complex was put together throughout the 19th century with the purchase of various surrounding lots, many with buildings on them at the time of purchase. The only building to remain standing after the church's purchase of

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these various properties was the Italianate townhouse on Paterson Street, purchased in 1884. It is now known as the sexton house, and may always have served that function.

Records of the building of the old parish house (now called the choir house) in 1874 are lost, but the parish house of 1897 is somewhat better documented. It was designed by the architect George Persell and it replaced an earlier residence on the corner lot known as the Boyd House.

The buildings of Christ Episcopal Church reflect changing taste in architecture through the 19th and early 20th centuries. Although the church tower is no longer the highest point in New Brunswick, the church does reflect the high style aspirations of the congregation in the 19th century, and the high level of care and maintenance it has received in the ensuing years.

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Christ Church Bibliography

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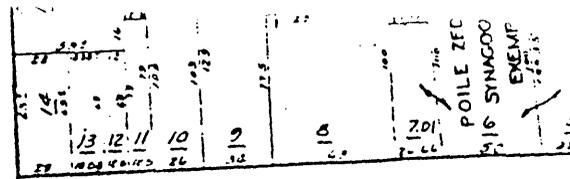
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Christ Episcopal Church  
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City of New Brunswick Tax Map  
 1"=50'

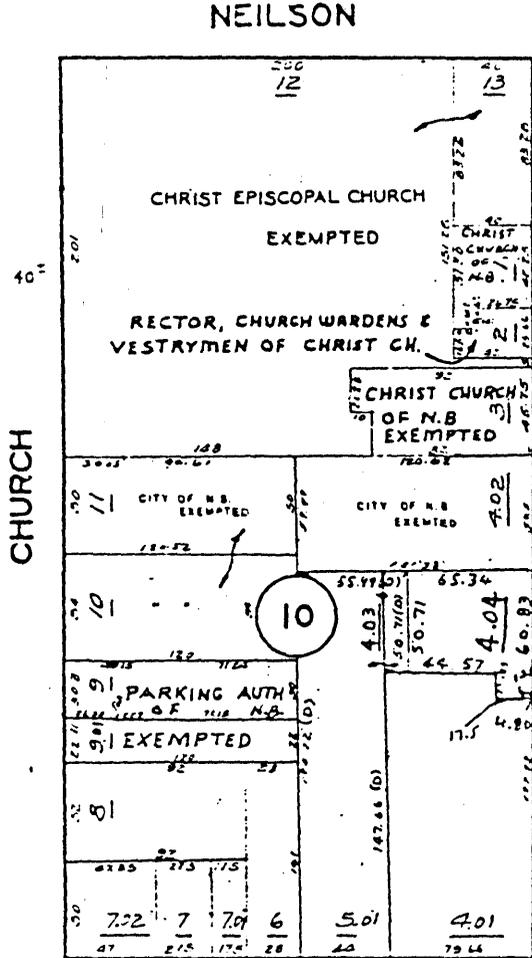
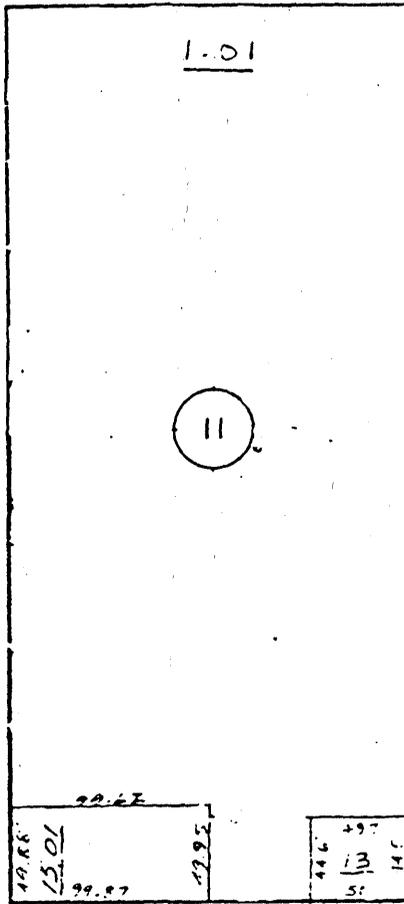


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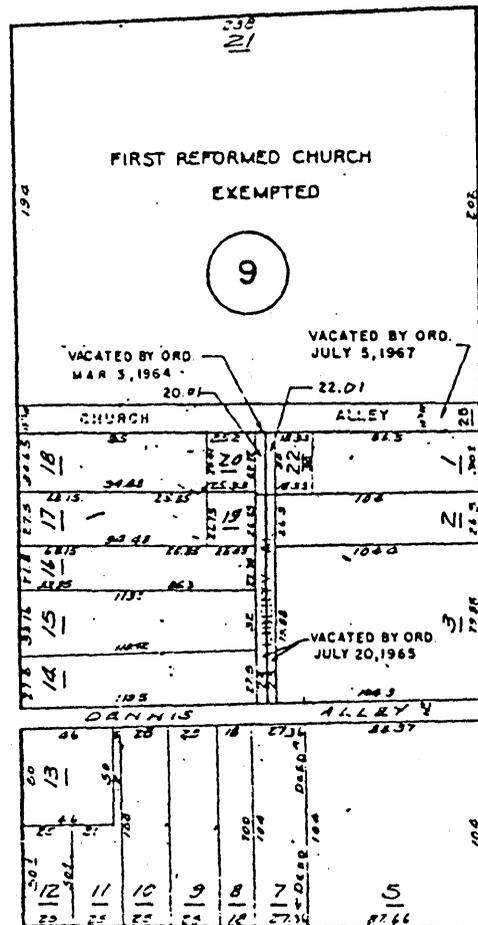


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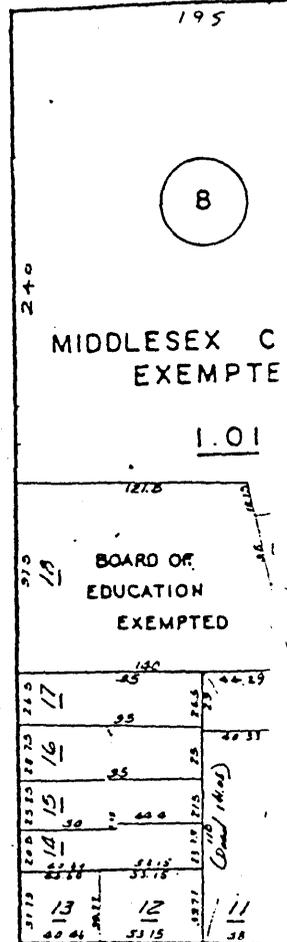
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PATERSON STREET

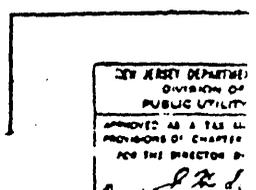
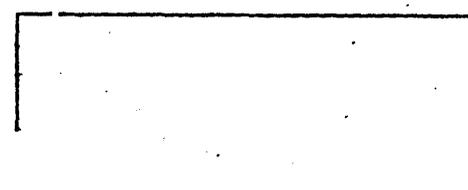
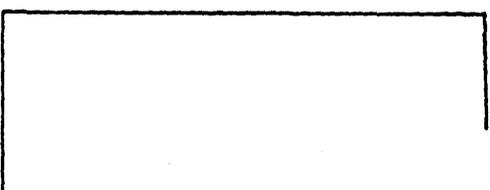
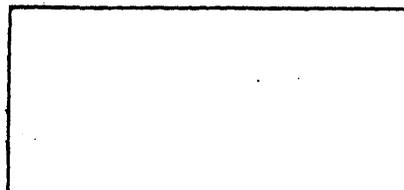


BAYARD STREET



STREET

GEORGE



BY ORDER OF THE  
 DIVISION OF  
 PUBLIC UTILITY  
 APPROVED AS A TAX MAP  
 PROVISIONS OF CHAPTER  
 127 OF THE STATUTES  
 OF 1954 AS AMENDED  
 BY THE DIRECTOR OF  
 PUBLIC UTILITY  
 DIVISION  
 JUN 3 1967