

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service



145

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).

1. Name of Property

historic name First Presbyterian Church
other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number 311 First Street/Rainbow Blvd N

N/A	not for publication
N/A	vicinity

city or town Niagara Falls
state New York code NY county Niagara code 063 zip code 14303

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,
I hereby certify that this X 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 X meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

___ national ___ statewide X local

Ruth A. Purpurt DBHPO 1/31/14
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property X meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official Date

Title State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
- determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register

___ other (explain): _____

Jon Edson H. Beall 4.11.14
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

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5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply.)

Category of Property
(Check only **one** box.)

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

- private
- public - Local
- public - State
- public - Federal

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	0	Total

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

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

N/A

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)

RELIGION/church

RELIGION/church

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions.)

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions.)

Gothic Revival, Romanesque Revival,
Arts and Crafts Movement

foundation: stone, concrete
walls: stone, stucco

roof: asphalt
other: _____

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Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance of the property. Explain contributing and noncontributing resources if necessary. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, setting, size, and significant features.)

Summary Paragraph

Located on east side of First Street (also known as Rainbow Boulevard North), the First Presbyterian Church is a late Gothic Revival, L-shaped building constructed of stone with round arched windows and entrances. First Street is in the west portion of the city of Niagara Falls, a few blocks from Niagara Falls State Park and surrounded by early to late twentieth century commercial buildings. The church was originally designed in 1849 by architect Calvin Fay and was built with locally quarried stone by the Buffalo firm of Fay and Barger. The most prominent feature of the church is the three-story, crenellated bell tower that has the bell from an earlier church building and is still used today. The building also features an 1879 chapel that was added to the rear of the building to house the expanding Sunday school and to provide a separate place for church meetings. The main building was expanded to the south during the period 1903-1904 which doubled the size to the current 64-foot deep by 67-foot wide space, with a 25-foot high ceiling. The sanctuary has eleven stained glass windows and a ceiling dome with an art glass window at the top of the dome. To the east of the sanctuary is the chapel added in 1879 and expanded in 1921. The church retains much of its period features such as compound arches and wood trim that imitates corbelling on the exterior. Extant interior features include a cove ceiling in the sanctuary from the 1903 expansion, paneled wainscoting and a spectacular opalescent style glass memorial window dating from 1922.

Although the church has been expanded and remodeled through the years, it retains a high degree of integrity to its period of significance (1849-1957). The building had a steeple which housed the Niagara Falls village clock but the clock was removed in 1914 and the steeple was replaced with a crenellated tower. During the remodels and additions, the outside Gothic architecture was retained and enhanced by the addition of corner crenellated towers matching those of the original 1849 structure. In 1921, the north side of the chapel was expanded, and more rooms were created in the basement by excavation.

Narrative Description

Exterior

Located in the city of Niagara Falls (Niagara County, New York), the First Presbyterian Church is the oldest building on First Street, surrounded by twentieth century commercial buildings, one of which is the former Rainbow Centre Mall (directly across the street). The church is on the east side of First Street, with a property frontage of 153 ½ -feet and a depth of 132 feet with a total area 20,262 square feet. The church is constructed mainly from native rough-faced stone in the late Gothic Revival style with Romanesque Revival features in the

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windows and main entrances. The foundation of the building is uncut stone. The main sanctuary and rear Fellowship Hall has a cross gabled roof. The chapel roof is flat and the south sanctuary expansion roof is slightly sloped. The entire roof is clad with asphalt shingle.

When viewed from First Street, the main feature of the church is the crenellated center tower flanked by two tall, round arched windows. The main entrance is in the lower part of the tower and consists of double wood doors set into a rounded arch with a decorative arched stone lintel. The middle section of the tower is separated by stone corbelling. This section has a large double art glass window set into a large arched opening and an arched stone lintel. A slight cornice over the window divides it from the upper portion that has louvered openings set into an arched opening similar to the window below. This is the bell tower section and has the bell installed from an earlier building. The north and south sides of the tower have the same louvered openings in the upper portion. There are single windows in the remaining sections of the tower and the top of the tower is crenellated. The entrances, tower and façade windows are set into compound arches of wood saw tooth and scallop decorations. A wood cornice of arches, saw tooth and scalloped dentils follows the roofline on the exterior of the sanctuary portion of the building. Windows in the north and south elevations have wood tracery, plain stone sills and arched stone lintels.

As previously mentioned, the exterior of the sanctuary portion of the building has crenellated towers. The main (bell) tower has two crenels, and the corner towers have one crenel each. There are three main entrances to the church and a separate entrance to the basement. The main entrance and the secondary entrance from the sanctuary both have rounded arch double doors. Another entrance on the north side provides access to offices and the Fellowship Hall, consisting of two modern glass doors. This portion of the building extends north of the rear part of the sanctuary and continues along the entire rear of the property. Part of the north side wall is stucco, a product of the 1921 expansion. A second story door and fire escape were added to this wall in 1957. A rear (east) entrance to the Fellowship Hall has a double wood paneled door and is graded to be mobility accessible. There is a red brick chimney here that connects directly to the boiler room in the basement under the hall.

The south elevation is blocked by the building on the next property, hence glass windows on that side are in-filled with brick since no light can be admitted. Landscaping is minimal, consisting of small gardens with shrubs and flowers around the front entrances and along the walk to the side entrance. At the side entrance is a memorial Japanese Lilac tree. A church owned 17-car asphalt paved parking lot is to the north of the building. The building has three stories, which can be defined as a basement, main floor (with high ceiling), and several second floor rooms along the outline of the Fellowship Hall (at the rear of the sanctuary). There is also an attic above the sanctuary.

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INTERIOR

The sanctuary is the dominant feature of the interior and is 64-feet deep by 67-feet wide, with a ceiling height of 25-feet in front and about 23.5-feet in the rear (the floor slopes down toward the altar). Eleven art-glass windows with walnut-frames are visible in the sanctuary with four around each side and three larger ones in the rear (west or street side). These are round arched, two-light windows separated by mullions in two styles, but have similar patterns. At the bottom of the windows are little blue circles with four lobes or quatrefoils, which are symbolic of the four gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

Eleven symmetrical cube lamps are suspended from the beamed cove ceiling in the sanctuary. Twelve rows of cushioned oak pews in four sections can accommodate up to 350 people. A circular, Tiffany-inspired opalescent glass window is located in the center of the ceiling dome, which can be illuminated by spotlights located above in the attic. The rear wall behind the altar is covered with walnut panels, some of which date to the original 1849 construction, according to historic photograph documentation. A plain Celtic cross faces the sanctuary from the niche behind the altar. This niche can be illuminated by lights hidden around the arch. To the right (south side) of the altar are five oak pews for the choir and space for instruments. Also in this alcove is an E.M. Skinner pipe organ, installed in 1921 and rebuilt and upgraded in 1975. Some of the pipes are visible above the choir, the rest are in an organ loft hidden from view.

The narthex is on the street entrance side and features a pull rope to manually ring the historic bell. There are two double-hung windows visible in the narthex, one on each side, with decorative geometric patterns of lead lines and opaque glass. Also in the main entrance is a display case containing a World War II Honor Roll book and a Book of Remembrance. The alternate street-side entrance to the sanctuary (to the south of the main entrance) has one window similar to those in the narthex. There is a stairway from this entrance into the basement dining room and classroom area. Entry to the sanctuary is from either entrance, up a short flight of stairs through double glass doors (two sets at the main entrance and one set at the south entrance). These doors are set into the original walnut door framing.

Three memorial plaques are hung in the alternate entrance, one dedicated to Albert Porter (1801-1888), the church's first Sunday School Superintendent, elder for over 50 years, and chief benefactor during that period. The remaining plaques commemorate William F. Evans (1823-1915), an elder and Sunday School Superintendent and Sarah A. Evans (1824-1888), a founder of the Women's Church and Missionary Society in 1865, and Albert S. Bacon (1863-1930), the church's longest-serving pastor (1890-1928, emeritus 1928-1930). The first two plaques were dedicated by family members, the third by the Congregation. The dedication date of the Porter plaque is unknown, but the Evans and Bacon plaques were dedicated in 1916 and 1931,

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respectively. The plaques originally hung in the front of the sanctuary, and were moved to their present location in 1975. In 1957, the trustees resolved that no additional plaques were to be displayed in the church.

The Fellowship Hall (formerly called the chapel) behind the sanctuary is accessed through internal doors at either side of the altar, as well as through the north side entrance or through the rear door via a ramp. Dimensions of the Fellowship Hall are approximately 51-feet by 31-feet with the height of the walnut-beamed ceiling at 17-feet. A primary feature of the Fellowship Hall is a memorial oak-framed stained glass window with words from Psalm 37:23, "The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord, and he delighteth in his way." It was designed by Harry Bell of the Bell-Vaughan Co. of Buffalo, and was placed in the altar niche of the sanctuary in 1921, but was reversed in 1957 to face the Fellowship Hall. At the left (north) of the Fellowship Hall are the church office, coatroom, and library. On the south side is the Fireside Room, so called because of a brick nonfunctional fireplace with an oak mantel. Oak wainscoting is present in the Fellowship Hall, library and Fireside Room. Windows in the north wall are of translucent, colorless dimpled glass installed in metal frames that mimic the stained glass windows. This design continues in the use of French door panels of oak and glass that separate the coat room, library and Fireside Room from the Fellowship Hall. A kitchenette was installed in 1974 between the Fireside Room and the choir loft. In 1978, a rest room was installed next to the Fireside Room, and a folding partition added to separate the two spaces.

Second floor rooms above the office, coat room, and library are used for the church's food pantry and music storage room and retain historic wainscoting and cabinetry. A business (financial) office is on the second floor at the west side of the Fellowship Hall. Access to these areas is by an oak staircase outside the first floor office door. A small second-floor rest room is at the head of these stairs. The sanctuary attic is accessed through the business office via a historic, sturdy wooden ladder still used for that purpose. A narrow staircase between the rest room and choir loft on the south side of the Fellowship Hall allows access to the Pastor's Office (above the Fireside Room) and to the organ loft.

The basement was renovated in the 1970s to increase the amount of useful space and bring the kitchen up to current code requirements. The kitchen retains its 1950 ten-burner, two-oven South Bend gas stove (from The Malleable Steel Range Mfg. Co., South Bend, Indiana). The south and west sides of the dining room can be closed off for classrooms by a set of folding partitions. A nursery is off the dining room in the northwest corner. Under the Fellowship Hall are more classrooms, closet and maintenance spaces, including a boiler room with the original coal-fired boiler that was switched to oil in 1948 and then to gas in 1972. The main rest rooms are also in the basement at either end of the main hallway. In spite of the recent upgrades to the basement area, the First Presbyterian Church has a high degree of historic and architectural integrity throughout the entire building and is a rare surviving building from Niagara Falls early history.

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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 the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

architecture

Period of Significance

1849-1957

Significant Dates

1849, 1879, 1903, 1914, 1921, 1957

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

1849: Calvin Fay (architect) and Lewis Barger (builder)
1879: George W. Wright (architect), David Phillips (builder)
1903: George W. Wright (architect/), P. B. Secord (builder)

Period of Significance (justification)

The period begins with the initial construction of the building in 1849 and ends with the renovation of the sanctuary in 1957.

Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)

The building is significant for its architectural distinction as a late Gothic Revival building with Romanesque Revival style details and for its early association with the Porter family, founders the village (now city) of Niagara Falls.

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Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance and applicable criteria.)

Constructed in 1849, the First Presbyterian Church is historically and architecturally significant as a surviving mid nineteenth century religious building located in the downtown area and for being the first Presbyterian assembly (1824) established in the village, now the city of Niagara Falls. The building is a late Gothic Revival church with Romanesque Revival features and an Arts and Crafts era Fellowship Hall that expanded the 1879 Chapel in 1921 to respond to the growth of the congregation and the needs of its various programs. The 1849 church was an early building designed by architect Calvin Fay of Buffalo and is the only known extant work of his in New York State, who relocated to Savannah, Georgia shortly after the church was finished. The building itself is one of the oldest surviving churches in Niagara Falls, being the second oldest church building in Niagara Falls in continuous use by its original denomination. The church is also associated with the early history of the Niagara Falls community for several of its members being involved in founding the village. Judge Augustus Porter was a member of the original First Presbyterian board of trustees. With his brother Peter, Judge Porter owned much of what is now downtown Niagara Falls, including the property on which the church was built. Judge Porter was influential in developing the business and commercial district of the village through fostering several businesses, while protecting Goat Island (now part of Niagara Falls State Park) from wanton commercial development. The four men considered the founders of what became the city of Niagara Falls were the Porter brothers (Augustus and Peter), Samuel DeVeaux and Parkhurst Whitney. Samuel DeVeaux was the first merchant in the village, the founder of the DeVeaux School and also one of the original trustees of First Presbyterian Church.

Developmental history/additional historic context information (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

Historical Context

Around 1800, the Reverend Elkanah Holmes was sent by the New York Presbytery Mission Society as the first missionary to the Tuscarora Indians in the Niagara region of Western New York and by 1806, a church was established on the reservation, being the first Presbyterian church in the area. In 1817, the Rev. David Smith, a school-teacher and missionary, established the Lewiston Presbyterian Church. By 1823, he had established Presbyterian churches in the nearby Niagara County villages of Youngstown, Wilson, and Lockport. Five people in Manchester (later incorporated as Niagara Falls Village in 1848) expressed a desire to establish their own church and on April 3, 1824, met with the Rev. David Smith in the schoolhouse on Prospect Street to

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establish First Presbyterian Church. The group consisted of Mr. and Mrs. Isaac Smith, Mrs. Isaac Smith, Jr., Mrs. Stephen Childs and Abraham Mesler. On November 28, 1826, a public meeting was held to officially organize the "First Presbyterian Society of Niagara." The first church board of trustees, elected at this meeting, consisted of Augustus Porter, Isaac Smith, Aaron Childs, Samuel DeVeaux, Ira Cook, and Ziba Gay. This predates the founding of the village of Niagara Falls (1848) and of Niagara City (Suspension Bridge, 1854) and the incorporation of the city in 1892.

The congregation originally met in the local schoolhouse at the corner of Falls and Mechanic (later Prospect) Street. In 1831, the church moved into its new church building on the southeast corner of Falls and First Streets. This building, a small wooden structure with a belfry but no steeple, was the first church building built by one denomination in Niagara Falls. A small building at the end of Falls Street called the Union Chapel was built by General Parkhurst Whitney in 1829 and all denominations were invited to use the building (though apparently First Presbyterian declined). In 1849, the Presbyterian church was sold to the Methodists and the purchase price applied to the cost of a new building located on First Street. The church was built on land donated by the Porter Family and much of the \$8,000 to cover construction costs came from them as well. Construction was started in 1849 and the building occupied later that year.

Other Early Churches in Niagara Falls

The oldest church building in continuous use to the present day is Saint Mary of the Cataract Roman Catholic on Fourth Street. The building was built in 1847, two years prior to First Presbyterian; however, their parish was founded in 1836, twelve years after that of First Presbyterian. In 1815, the first two Methodist Societies of Niagara County were formed in Manchester (Niagara Falls) and Olcott. The Manchester group's first building was the Union Chapel, mentioned in the preceding paragraph and their second was the old church purchased from First Presbyterian. The Methodist church (now St. Paul's) built another church in 1867, and finally another in 1923, which still stands, but is no longer a Methodist church. The Episcopal Church (now St. Peter's) began in 1823 when a priest from the Diocese of New Jersey conducted services in the schoolhouse. In 1829, they met in the Union Chapel. In 1849, they moved to a church just north of First Presbyterian on First Street (visible to the left of First Presbyterian in an 1856 painting by Ferdinand Richardt). The cornerstone for the present St. Peter's Church was laid in 1873 and completed in 1880. The First Congregational Church of Niagara Falls was organized and incorporated in 1854, with a cornerstone laid for a building 1855. The building was dedicated in 1857 and is still in use by the church at present.

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Early Niagara Falls History

In 1806, Augustus Porter settled near Niagara Falls with his family. He visited the area as a surveyor years earlier and recognized the importance of the falls as a scenic landscape and source of power. Porter was one of many who recognized this potential, the first being Daniel Joncaire when the area was under French rule and used the water power to operate a sawmill. In the late eighteenth century, farmer John Stedman built a gristmill on the same spot. Stedman also raised goats on the island opposite the mills, giving it the name Goat Island. Augustus Porter purchased Goat Island and Stedman's lands opposite and built a gristmill on the site of the old Stedman mill.

Porter originally called the name of the area opposite Goat Island Manchester, believing that the lands near the falls had the potential to be an industrial community similar to Manchester, England. Porter became the new settlement's first postmaster and later, the first judge for Niagara County. He also served in the New York State legislature in 1802. With his brother General Peter B. Porter and business partner Benjamin Barton, they obtained the rights to a one mile strip of land along the Niagara River to Lake Erie that was previously reserved by the State of New York, giving them control of overland shipping goods around the falls. In spite of Porter's efforts, settlement languished and the few settlers in Manchester were driven away by the War of 1812. In December 1813, British forces captured Fort Niagara and burned almost all buildings in towns along the Niagara River up to and including Buffalo. Both Augustus's house in Manchester and Peter B. Porter's house in Black Rock were burned. Incidentally, Peter was the New York State militia's quartermaster general in the Niagara Frontier during the war of 1812, and elected to the U. S. House of Representatives in 1808. A commemorative plaque stands near the corner of First Street and Buffalo Avenue in Niagara Falls, marking the site of the first Augustus Porter house, and the site on which it was later rebuilt in 1818.

After the war, Augustus and Peter Porter recognized the value in keeping the Goat Island property undeveloped and it was eventually sold by their heirs to the State in 1885 to become part of the Niagara Reservation (now Niagara Falls State Park). Due to resisting all attempts to commercialize it, Augustus was labeled by Canadian historian Pierre Berton as "the first conservationist". Horatio A. Parsons, First Presbyterian Church's first regular minister in 1826, also authored the first guidebook to Niagara Falls in 1829, called *A Guide to Travelers Visiting the Falls of Niagara*. This saved the visitor the cost of hiring a guide and was so popular that Parsons issued an enlarged edition in 1835. He later sold the rights to the Steele Publishing Co. of Buffalo.

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Judge Porter built a bridge to Goat Island and charged visitors a bridge toll, which ultimately got him into trouble with First Presbyterian Church, since he was charging tolls on Sundays. In 1839, he and several other church members were charged with violating the Sabbath and brought before the church Session for a hearing. While Judge Porter apparently took this in stride, his son Albert H. Porter, clerk of the Session at the time, argued his case with fervor. Judge Porter claimed that he joined the church at the request of the founders, who told him then that the issue of his business would not be a hindrance. In view of this, the Session declared that the decision was incorrect and unconstitutional and both parties agreed that the Judge's relationship with the church be terminated or annulled on January 6, 1849. Efforts to rescind the annulment were pursued by Albert Porter, who argued that it was illegal because Judge Porter was a *bona fide* member and could not be dismissed in such manner.

Apparently no further action was taken. Judge Porter died later that year and he apparently bore no grudge, since his estate bequeathed \$1000 to the church for its 1849 building fund. However, the incident was a bit stressful for Rev. Callahan, the church's pastor at the time, and he and the church agreed to dissolve their relationship that same year. In 1855, Lavinia Porter, daughter of Augustus, gave a home built for her by her father to the church for use as a manse. This property at 162 Buffalo Ave.(NR listed 2012), was owned by the church for over 100 years, serving as a home for a number of its pastors and as meeting space.

Over the years, First Presbyterian Church established two additional churches in Niagara Falls, one on Pierce Avenue in 1893 and the Third Presbyterian (now Bacon Memorial) in the 1920s. The Women's Church and Missionary Society was founded in 1865 to provide clothing to destitute children of the Sunday School. Apart from the regular church benevolences, they contributed to a number of causes, including assistance for the victims of the 1871 Chicago fire. Later, they regularly donated funds to support the Presbyterian Ward at Niagara Falls Memorial Hospital. The society continued for over 100 years under different names.

In the 1850s, a number of former members of First Presbyterian Church were active in abolition efforts to end slavery. William Childs was one of these former members and was considered a major Niagara Falls abolitionist who was personally involved with the Underground Railroad. Childs and his wife Laura were received into full communion in First Presbyterian in 1828 and into membership in 1835, but left in the 1850s. They rejoined First Presbyterian in 1872, where Childs remained until his death in 1885.

Another less direct connection between First Presbyterian and the Underground Railroad was through the Cataract House, the premier hotel in Niagara Falls at the time, owned by Parkhurst Whitney, who, like Augustus Porter, was a founder of the city. Whitney sold the hotel in 1846 to his son Solon and his sons-in-law

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James F. Trott (who married daughter Celinda Eliza) and Dexter Jerauld (who married daughter Angeline). James F. Trott was a trustee at First Presbyterian Church. The Cataract House employed a staff of African American waiters, a majority of them believed to be escaped slaves who assisted other freedom seekers across the Niagara River to Canada, with the tacit approval and support of the hotel owners.

A number of First Presbyterian Church members were active in the Niagara Falls community, including trustee James F. Trott, who was dubbed the "Father of Niagara Falls schools". In 1848, he was elected a trustee of School District No. 2, Town of Niagara, a position he held for 50 years. He also served as its president. In 1855, he was elected president of the Board of Education of the Union Free School District No. 2, serving for over 40 years. He was appointed the first member of the Niagara Falls School Board after the city was incorporated in 1892. He built up the library from a mere handful of books to 502 volumes by 1852, which were housed in the Third Street School. Later, the expanding collection was moved to the Frontier Mart Building on Falls Street. The school district library room in that building often served as the meeting place for the church's board of trustees when Trott served on that board in the 1870s, before the chapel addition (providing more meeting room space) was completed in 1879. Trott served the library over a long period, and played major role in it receiving a state charter in 1895 as the Niagara Falls Public Library.

First Presbyterian Church responded to the needs of the local community, which included providing temporary use of the building as classroom space after the local high school burned down on January 24, 1922. The church also sponsored a Boy Scout troop beginning in 1914, just four years after the formation of the Boy Scouts of America. It added a basement gymnasium for the Scouts with the 1921 remodeling. Likewise in 1916, the church sponsored a Girl Scout troop, the second in the city. The church also supported and provided space for various Temperance Society meetings and hosted the annual meeting of the Women's Christian Temperance Union in October 1926. The church also had clock installed in the steeple in 1850 that was used as the official village clock. The village allocated \$52 per year to wind and maintain the clock as the official timepiece for the town.

In 1878, Vincent Porter, secretary of the church's board of trustees and grandson of Augustus Porter, sent a letter to the trustees of Niagara Falls village requesting the erection of a lamp post with a "suitable gas light maintained thereon" in front of the Church, by reason that the "Village have now and for many years past have had without compensation thereof the use of the Tower and bell for a Town Clock." A local newspaper article of March 23, 1896, stated that the trustees informed the Niagara Falls city aldermen that they would assume care of the clock for \$75 per year, not counting any repairs since they were averse to the city "hiring irresponsible persons, boys as has been the practice for the past year, at liberty to enter the church at any and

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all times ostensibly for the purpose of attending and winding the clock.” The trustees also suggested having the four dials repainted, which they would do at cost. The aldermen recommended that the proposition be accepted. In June, 1897, \$75 was received from the city for care of the clock for that year. This was the last money received from the city for that purpose, and the clock was allowed to run down. It was removed with the steeple in 1914 and the clock was donated to the local historical society.

Architecture

According to trustees’ records, the architect selected for the new 1849 building for First Presbyterian Church was Calvin Fay (1819-1890) of the Buffalo firm of Fay and Barger, where they maintained a shop and office. Lewis Barger was his partner and a carpenter by trade. A search of local records indicated that First Presbyterian Church was the only known building of Fay’s constructed in Western New York, before he moved to Savannah, Georgia. The design of the building revealed that Fay was strongly influenced by another Buffalo architect, Calvin Otis (1814-1883). In the 1849-50 Buffalo City Directory, Calvin Fay’s office was listed at 190 Main, and Calvin Otis’ office at 190½ Main. The same directory listed Fay as a builder and Otis as an architect. Otis had a national reputation and designed a number of churches in the Gothic Revival style, including several in Buffalo. Otis also designed the enormous International Hotel in Niagara Falls, built in 1853. Grace Episcopal Church in Galena, Illinois was one of Otis’s churches that had striking similarities to First Presbyterian, Niagara Falls, and was also completed in 1849. Both churches were built of locally quarried stone and feature a prominent three part entrance with a double arched wood door set into a compound Gothic arch. Another of Otis’s churches with similarities to First Presbyterian was the Gothic Revival Mariners’ Church in Detroit, also designed in 1849. Like the other churches, it was of stone construction and featured corner towers.

When Otis was commissioned in 1851 to design St. John’s Episcopal Church in Savannah, Georgia, he took Calvin Fay with him to assist on the project with supervising the construction. Fay remained in Georgia, where he established an architectural practice, specializing in Italianate design. He submitted the winning design for the Italianate Lemuel P. Grant mansion in Atlanta, built in 1854-1856, a building that escaped the burning of Atlanta by General Sherman in 1864. In 1856, Fay partnered with Charles Sholl to design the state mental hospital (Powell Building) in Milledgeville, Georgia, in the Greek Revival style. During the Civil War, Fay served as an engineer in the Confederate Army.¹ After the war, he settled in Atlanta and held the office of building inspector while continuing his practice. Besides Sholl, Fay also partnered with talented architects Max Corput,

¹ “The Views of a Southern Man.” *Buffalo Daily Courier*, 29 August 1865. Excerpts from a letter from Calvin Fay to a friend in Buffalo, New York 13 August 1865.

First Presbyterian Church

Name of Property

Niagara County, NY

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Dewitt Bruyn, and John Moser. In 1881, Calvin Fay took on a new partner, Alfred S. Eichberg (1859-1921), and they designed a number of buildings, of which the Telfair Hospital for Females in Savannah (1884), was one of their most notable. In 1887, they designed the Central of Georgia Railway Station, now known as Eichberg Hall, which now houses the Architecture Department of the Savannah College of Art and Design. This building had a large array of arched windows in the Neoclassic Revival style.

Built in 1849, Fay's design for First Presbyterian Church featured a prominent bell tower with a ground level entrance and contained the bell from the previous 1831 building. As the congregation grew, a chapel was added to the rear of the church in 1879 to give the Sunday School and other organizations more room to meet. The architect, a member of First Presbyterian Church, was George W. Wright (1830-1908). Local builder David Phillips was in charge of construction. George W. Wright was born in England, lived in Canada for a while, then moved to Niagara Falls in 1859. He began his architecture practice in 1878, hence the chapel was early in his career. He also designed the famous Prospect House hotel around 1887, a couple blocks from the church at Second Street and Jefferson Avenue (now Rainbow Boulevard). The three-story brick hotel was painted white, with the entire lower floor of Vermont marble with Tennessee and Georgia marble wainscoting. The main staircase was Italian marble with mahogany banisters. Prospect House welcomed such illustrious visitors as President and Mrs. Theodore Roosevelt, Salvation Army founder William Booth, inventor Alexander Graham Bell, and republican presidential nominee (in 1916) and supreme court chief justice, Charles Evans Hughes.² George W. Wright also took an active role in civic affairs. He was the last president of Niagara Falls village and the first mayor of the city of Niagara Falls when it incorporated in 1892.

By 1891, it was apparent that more sanctuary seating room was needed and a trustee committee was appointed to look into options. Over the course of several years, different plans were considered, including adding a gallery or building a new church. After much patience, Pastor Albert Bacon told the trustees in 1901 that it was time either to remodel or rebuild. A plan by architect George W. Wright to expand the sanctuary was adopted, and P. B. Secord was hired as the contractor. Construction was begun in 1902 and completed in 1903. Old pews with doors at the ends were replaced with new pews without doors. Pews were supplied by the Wabash Church & School Furniture Co. Much of the furnishing was provided by the Ladies Church and Missionary Society, with help from the Young People's Society and the Sunday School. Galleries at both ends of the chapel were also added. In 1913, these galleries, which just had railings, were fitted with walnut paneling from the railings to the floor. In 1914, the wood and tin steeple with clock was removed and replaced with a crenellated stone tower. At the same time, wood portions of the corner towers were replaced with stone.

² In spite of its illustrious clientele, the hotel was razed in 1963.

First Presbyterian Church
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In 1921, another church remodeling project was undertaken to increase the amount of usable space. Martin H. Miller was the architect, and A. W. Moyer & Son did the carpentry, structural steel and masonry work. Miller was local and met with the Trustees numerous times to review plans. The sanctuary received a new hardwood floor and a new Skinner pipe organ. The front platform and choir loft were expanded, and a memorial art glass window added, dedicated to church elder William Campbell. Excavation added extra space for the basement and the dining room roughly doubled in size. An area known today as the "pit" was hewn out of solid rock for a gymnasium for the Scouts. A new boiler room was similarly created. An improved heating and ventilation system was also installed. Above ground, the north side of the chapel was expanded. The white stucco section of the north exterior wall was part of this expansion. The chapel, organ, and memorial window were dedicated during consecutive Sunday services in January 1922.

A renovation of the sanctuary was done in 1957. Niagara County native Wallace Moll (1920-2012) was the architect and was known for his consulting engineering firm which specialized in church architecture. Though trained as an engineer, he studied architecture by tutelage and entered the church architecture field as a sideline connected with his devout Lutheran faith. Moll combined high standards of craftsmanship with high quality materials to create appropriate, sustainable structures. He served as consulting engineer for the Lutheran Church of the Missouri Synod, and designed several churches in Niagara County, including Bethlehem Revival Temple and Mt. Zion Baptist Church, both of Niagara Falls. He also designed townhouses, municipal buildings, private homes and housing for the elderly.

In the First Presbyterian sanctuary remodel, the old walnut pews were removed and sold. The floor was retiled, and new blond oak pews made by the Valley City Mfg. Co. Ltd., of Dundas, Ontario (Canada) were installed. A center aisle was created, and the choir area expanded and moved from the chancel area to its present location to the right of the pulpit. The new choir loft consisted of six rows of blond oak pews. The chancel area was expanded; a second pulpit with carvings, a new baptismal font, communion table and chairs (all blond oak) were added. Two cushioned bench seats in the chancel, a darker shade of oak, were also added. At the same time, the memorial stained glass window facing the pews was reversed to face the Fellowship Hall (then called the chapel), and the Celtic cross was installed.

The property to the north of the building was purchased in 1958 and called the Annex. This was the old YMCA building and was used for Sunday School and nursery space. In 1970, the Church was slated for demolition as an urban renewal project, and the congregation again considered building a new church. Architect Victor Christ-Janer was hired for the project, but voiced his opinion that the congregation could never afford to build

First Presbyterian Church

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an edifice such as what it had. As a result, only the Annex was demolished and the church promised to the city to build a park in its place. The local firm Wright and Kremers was contracted in 1973-1974 to build a multi-tiered park with flowing water. In 2005, the park was converted to a more practical 17-vehicle parking lot for use by the congregation.

In the 1970s, the church itself had the basement remodeled (with drop ceilings) and expanded on the east side. The entrances into the sanctuary were shortened and a new elevated entrance way installed. The approach to the entrance is now parallel to the sidewalk, as the original design with steps perpendicular to the sidewalk was considered a hazard. In the sanctuary, the ceiling was repaired and the structure reinforced. At that time, new sound and HVAC systems were added. In 1983, the inner oak doors in the rear of the sanctuary were replaced with glass doors, but the original walnut door frames were kept. Between 1988 and 1999, the stone exterior was re-pointed and refurbished and the cornices and the verge boards repaired and repainted.

In spite of the alteration of the entrances, the building retains much of its integrity and has faithfully served the congregation since 1849. On more than one occasion, the church had to choose between updating the present building or abandoning the older, historic building for something newer and more modern. The most recent decision to remain in the historic building and continue to be its caretakers was one of the factors taken into consideration when the City of Niagara Falls designated the church as a local historic landmark in 2004.

First Presbyterian Church
Name of Property

Niagara County, NY
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9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

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- Porter, Peter A. *Official Guide: Niagara – Falls – River – Frontier*, Buffalo, NY: The Matthews-Northrup Works, 1901, 311.

First Presbyterian Church
Name of Property

Niagara County, NY
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Williams, Edward T. "Few Buildings of Village Days Are Still Standing." *Niagara Falls Gazette*, July 17, 1948.

_____. *History of the First Presbyterian Church*, in *Official Souvenir Program, One Hundredth Anniversary, First Presbyterian Church, Niagara Falls, N.Y.* Niagara Falls, NY: Power City Press, 1924.

Williams, Edward T. and Marjorie F. Williams. *125 Years of Service: First Presbyterian Church Niagara Falls, N. Y. 1824-1949*. Niagara Falls, NY: First Presbyterian Church, publisher, 1949.

Williams, Marjorie F., et. al. *The First Presbyterian Church of Niagara Falls, N. Y., 175 Years 1824-1999.*, Niagara Falls, NY: First Presbyterian Church, publisher, 1999.

Winfield, Mason. *Ghosts of 1812: History, Folklore, Tradition in the Niagara War*. Buffalo, NY: M. Winfield (publisher), 2009.

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 # _____
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
 - Other State agency
 - Federal agency
 - Local government
 - University
 - Other
- Name of repository: First Presbyterian Church archives

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Less than one acre
(Do not include previously listed resource acreage.)

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 18N 169413 4778449
Zone Easting Northing

3 _____
Zone Easting Northing

2 _____
Zone Easting Northing

4 _____
Zone Easting Northing

First Presbyterian Church
Name of Property

Niagara County, NY
County and State

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The boundary is indicated by a heavy line on the enclosed map with scale.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundary is the same as during the period of significance.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title John Goddard, (Elder)
organization First Presbyterian Church date December 2013
street & number 311 First Street telephone 716-285-3555
city or town Niagara Falls state NY zip code 14303
e-mail Goddard3255@roadrunner.com

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **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. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Continuation Sheets**
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

Photographs:

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map.

Name of Property: First Presbyterian Church

City or Vicinity: Niagara Falls

County: Niagara State: New York

Photographer: Photos 0001, 0002 & 0019, First Presbyterian Church; Photos 0003-0018 Virginia L. Bartos

Date Photographed: Photos 0001 & 0002, 21 February 2013; Photos 0003-0018, 27 June 2013

Description of Photograph(s) and number:

0001 of 0019. West elevation (main façade) of church, viewed looking east from First St.

0002 of 0019. Detail view of main tower, viewed looking east from First St.

First Presbyterian Church
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- 0003 of 0019. North elevation, viewed looking southeast from church parking lot.
- 0004 of 0019. Looking south from church parking lot down First St.
- 0005 of 0019. Detail view of south side of bell tower, view looking north.
- 0006 of 0019. Detail view of top portion of west side of bell tower.
- 0007 of 0019. Detail view of sanctuary window.
- 0008 of 0019. Chapel/Fellowship Hall section, viewed from parking lot looking south.
- 0009 of 0019. Doors in east elevation/Fellowship Hall section.
- 0010 of 0019. Window in narthex, east side of building.
- 0011 of 0019. Overview of sanctuary interior, looking northeast.
- 0012 of 0019. Detail view of window in sanctuary dome.
- 0013 of 0019. View of altar and altar niche, view looking east.
- 0014 of 0019. Stairs to second floor, north west side of building.
- 0015 of 0019. View from second floor of Fellowship Hall, looking north.
- 0016 of 0019. View of memorial window in Fellowship Hall behind altar niche.
- 0017 of 0019. Fellowship Hall, view looking south east from ground floor.
- 0018 of 0019. Fireside Room, south end of Fellowship Hall.
- 0019 of 0019. Supplemental image of 1904 view of church from archives.

Property Owner:

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

name First Presbyterian Church
street & number 311 First Street telephone (716) 285-3555
city or town Niagara Falls state NY zip code 14303

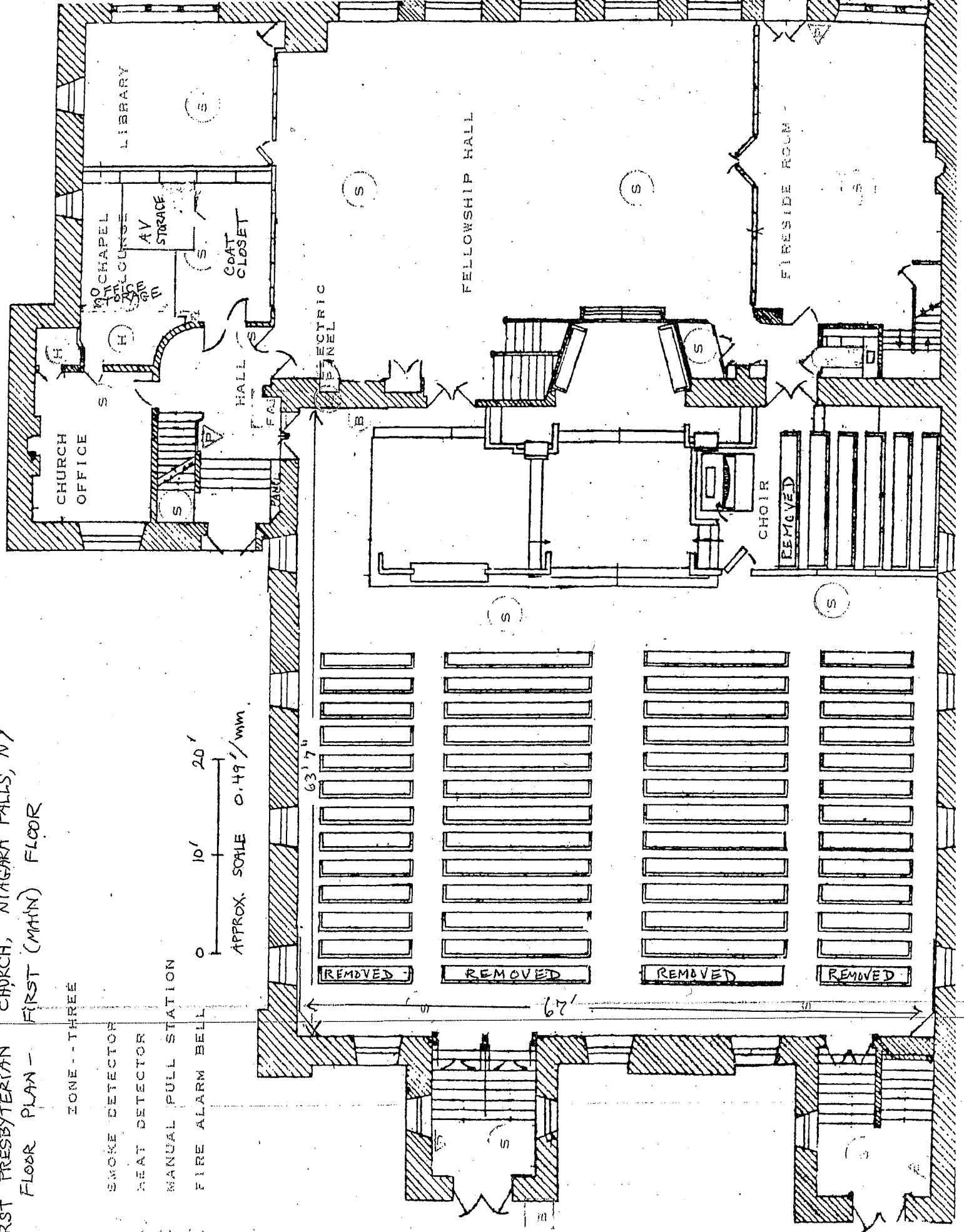
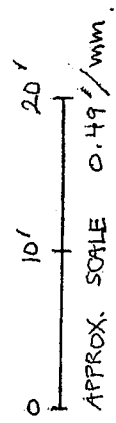
Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 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 Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

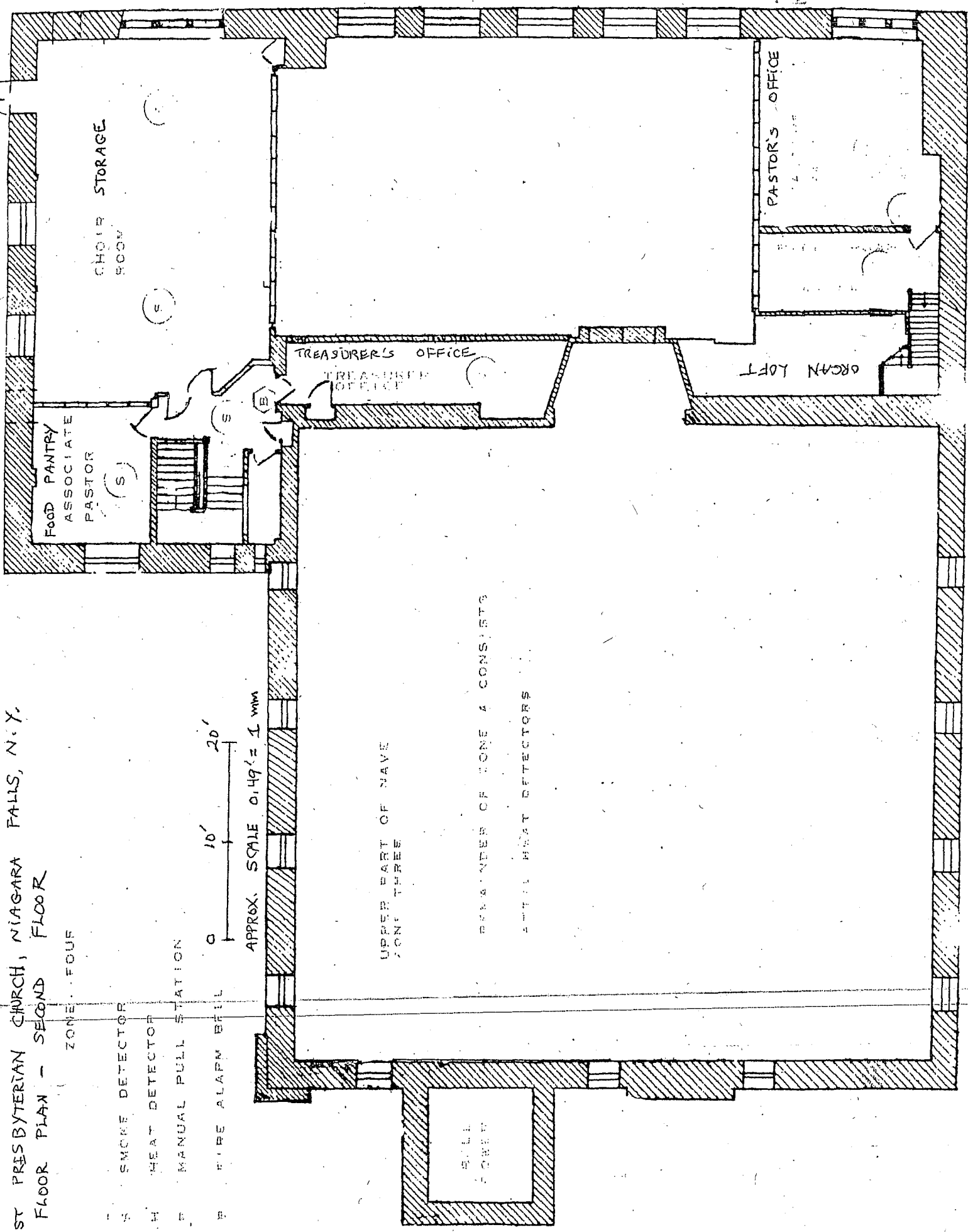
FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, NIAGARA FALLS, NY
 FLOOR PLAN - FIRST (MAIN) FLOOR

ZONE - THREE

- SMOKE DETECTOR
- HEAT DETECTOR
- MANUAL PULL STATION
- FIRE ALARM BELL



FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, NIAGARA FALLS, N.Y.
 FLOOR PLAN - SECOND FLOOR



- ZONE FOUR
- S SMOKE DETECTOR
 - H HEAT DETECTOR
 - F MANUAL PULL STATION
 - B FIRE ALARM BELL

APPROX. SCALE 0.49' = 1 mm



UPPER PART OF NAIVE
 ZONE THREE

REMAINDER OF ZONE 4 CONSISTS
 OF HEAT DETECTORS

BELL
 TOWER

CHOIR STORAGE

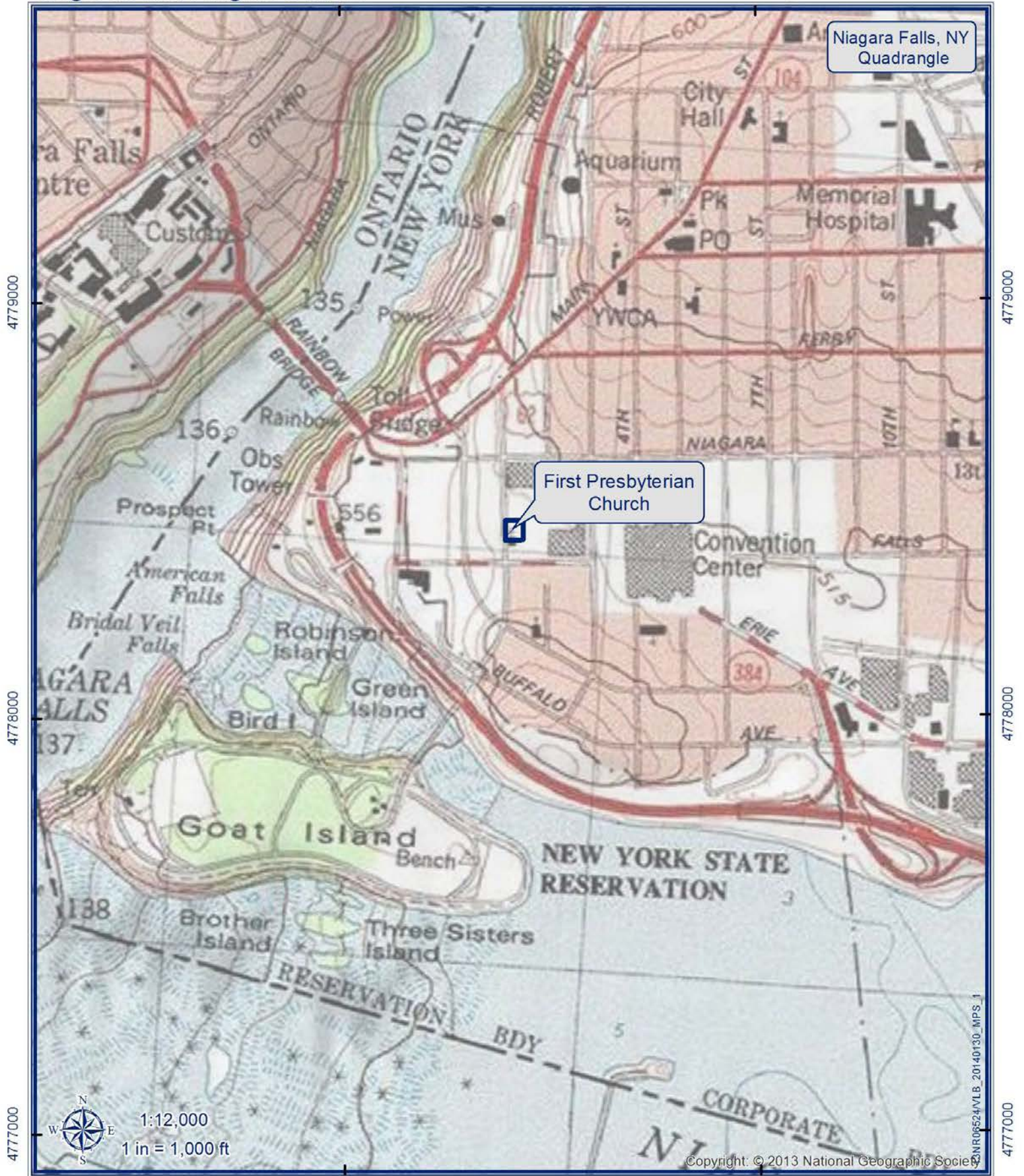
FOOD PANTRY
 ASSOCIATE
 PASTOR

TREASURERS OFFICE

TREASURER
 OFFICE

PASTOR'S OFFICE

ORGAN LOFT



169000

170000

Coordinate System: NAD 1983 UTM Zone 18N
Projection: Transverse Mercator
Datum: North American 1983
Units: Meter



 First Presbyterian

Tax Parcel Data:
Niagara Co. RPS
gis1.erie.gov/GC/NiagaraCountyNY







ENTRANCE TO ALL WELCOME

FIRST PERRY



FIRST PRESBYTERIAN

FIFTEEN WINECHONS - THURSDAYS AT NOON ALL WELCOME



FIRST
PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH



FIRST
PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH



311



FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

WORSHIP & SERVICE: 10:00 AM
TABLE: STORY WED 10:00 AM 7PM
BAPTIST: 10:00 AM 7PM

311

Smokin'







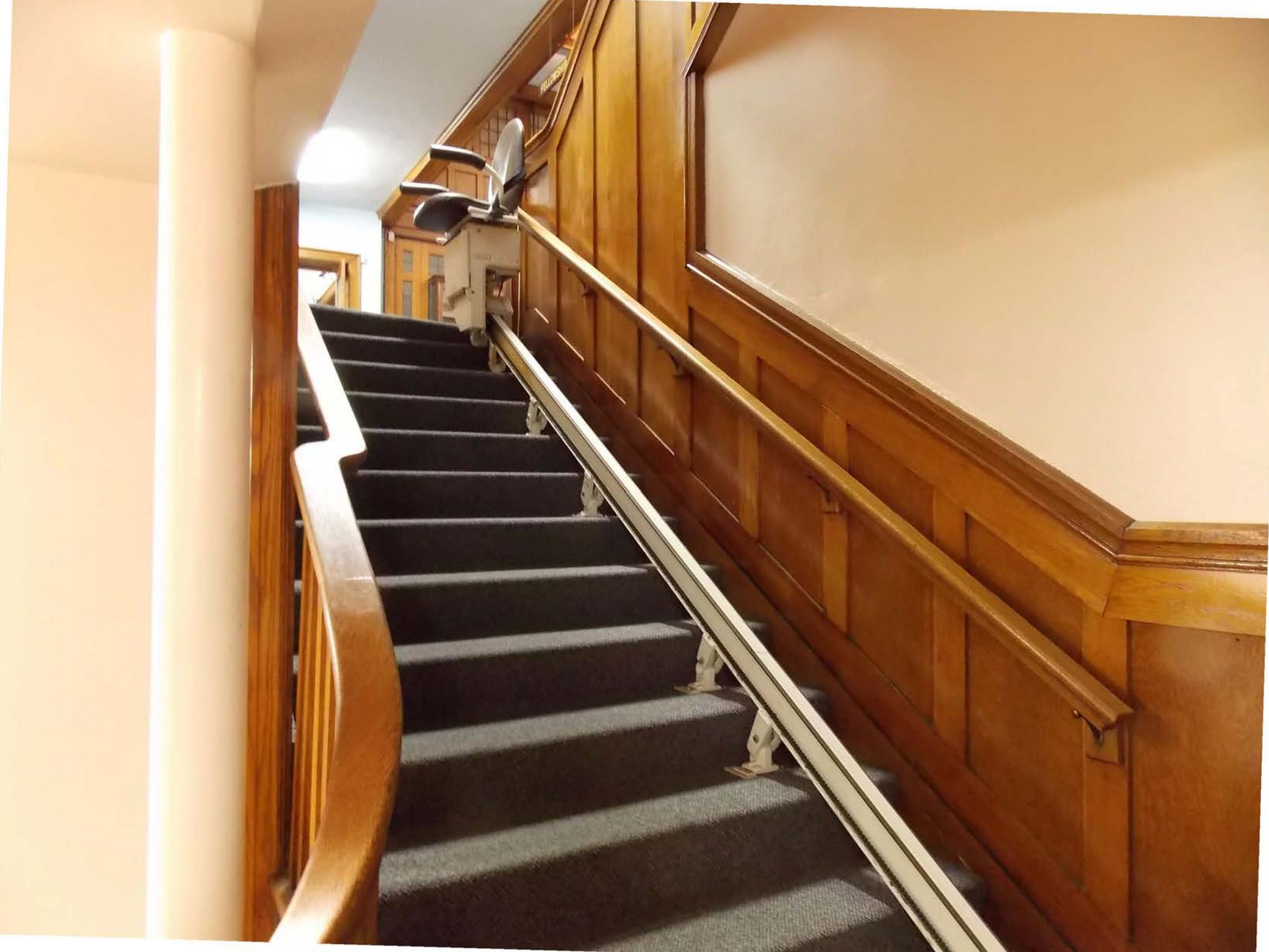




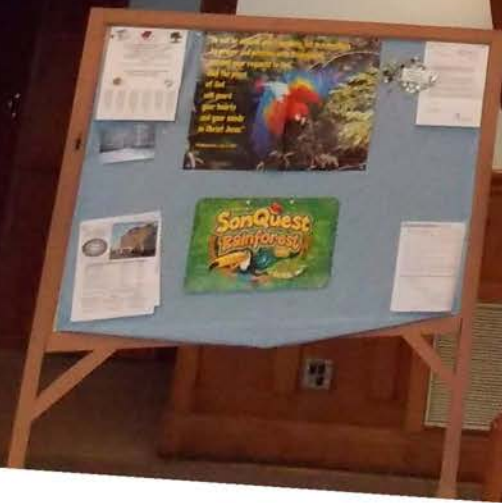
















HOLY
HOLY
HOLY



Small text and graphics on the display board, including what appears to be a small illustration of a person.



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY First Presbyterian Church
NAME:

MULTIPLE
NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: NEW YORK, Niagara

DATE RECEIVED: 2/24/14 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 3/27/14
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 4/11/14 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 4/12/14
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 14000145

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N
OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N
REQUEST: N SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: N NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT RETURN REJECT 4.11.14 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

Entered in
The National Register
of
Historic Places

RECOM./CRITERIA _____

REVIEWER _____ DISCIPLINE _____

TELEPHONE _____ DATE _____

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N

If a nomination is returned to the nominating authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the NPS.



New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation

Division for Historic Preservation
P.O. Box 189, Waterford, New York 12188-0189
518-237-8643



Andrew M. Cuomo
Governor

Rose Harvey
Commissioner

20 February 2014

Alexis Abernathy
National Park Service
National Register of Historic Places
1201 Eye St. NW, 8th Floor
Washington, D.C. 20005

Re: National Register Nominations

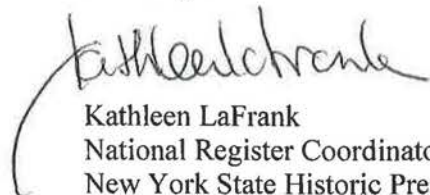
Dear Ms. Abernathy:

I am pleased to enclose the following two National Register nominations, both on disc, to be considered for listing by the Keeper of the National Register:

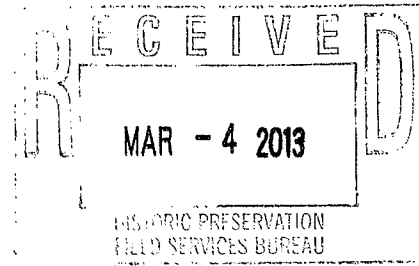
First Presbyterian Church, Niagara County
Romanta T. Miller House, Monroe County

Please feel free to call me at 518.237.8643 x 3261 if you have any questions.

Sincerely:



Kathleen LaFrank
National Register Coordinator
New York State Historic Preservation Office



STATEMENT OF OWNER SUPPORT


Before an individual nomination proposal will be reviewed or nominated, the owner(s) of record must sign and date the following statement:

I, Stephen Jackson, as Board-elected President and representative of the Congregation of First Presbyterian Church, Niagara Falls, NY, represent the owners (the Congregation) of the property at

311 First St., Niagara Falls, NY 14303

(street number and name, city, village or town, state of nominated property)

I support its consideration and inclusion in the State and National Registers of Historic Places, in agreement with the Church board's action of February 11, 2013.

 2/24/13
(signature and date)

Stephen Jackson

245 Marys Lane

Youngstown, NY 14174

(mailing address)



City of Niagara Falls, New York

P.O. Box 69, Niagara Falls, NY 14302-0069

August 15, 2013

Mr. John Goddard
First Presbyterian Church
311 First Street
Niagara Falls, NY 14303

RE: Local Historic Landmark Status

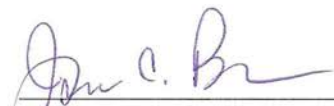
Dear Mr. Goddard,

This letter is to confirm that the First Presbyterian Church (building exterior and interior public areas) is an official landmark on the local register. The Niagara Falls Historic Preservation Commission approved landmark application on June 16, 2004. On July 6, 2004, the Niagara Falls City Council approved the landmark designation (copy attached).

Please note, a Certificate of Appropriateness must be approved by the Niagara Falls Historic Preservation Commission prior to the issuance of a building permit for any alteration, restoration, reconstruction, excavation, grading demolition or new building addition to the historic structure. The Certificate of Appropriateness, per ordinance 1335.07-1, shall be in addition to and not in lieu of any building permit that may be required by any other ordinance of the City of Niagara Falls. The purpose of a Certificate of Appropriateness is to enhance and protect the historic integrity of any structure on the local register of historic structures.

Please feel free to contact me at 286-4467 if you have any questions or require additional information.

Sincerely,



James C. Bragg
Historic Preservation Commission Secretary

xc: C. Stoianoff, City Historian

NIAGARA FALLS HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION, DESIGNATION OF SOME INTERIOR ELEMENTS AND ALL OF THE OF THE EXTERIOR OF 311 RAINBOW BLVD., THE FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, APPROVAL

Agenda Item #13

RE: Approval of designation of some interior elements and all of the exterior of 311 Rainbow Blvd., the First Presbyterian Church, as an historic landmark

Attached (on file in the City Clerk's Office) is the report from the Niagara Falls Historic Preservation Commission relative to the recommendation for designation of some interior elements and all of the exterior of 311 Rainbow Blvd. First Presbyterian Church, as an historic landmark under the City Historic Preservation Ordinance. The exterior and that portion of the interior that is open to the public is subject to designation under the City Historic Preservation Ordinance. This proposed designation was approved with the participation of the building owners.

The Historic Preservation ordinance provides:

133.05-02(I) At its next scheduled meeting after receipt of any recommendation from the Commission, the City Council shall consider the designation or acquisition of the landmark site or historic structure, or the designation of the historic district. A majority vote shall be required by the City Council for the designation or acquisition. The Mayor shall approve or veto said designation or acquisition as provided by law.

Will the Council vote to approve the designation of the exterior of 311 Rainbow Blvd. First Presbyterian Church, including the exterior landscaping of Fleming Park, along with the interior Sanctuary and Fellowship Hall, and forward the designation to the Mayor for approval, as provided by City Ordinance?

Council Member Thomason moved that the communication be received and filed and the communication approved.

Yeas	5
Nays	0

APPROVED