

PH0375122

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE:	Kentucky
COUNTY:	Fayette
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY DATE	DEC 30 1974

1. NAME

COMMON:  
First Presbyterian Church

AND/OR HISTORIC:  
Same (congregation originally Mount Zion Church)

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:  
174 North Mill Street

CITY OR TOWN:  
Lexington

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT:  
6th

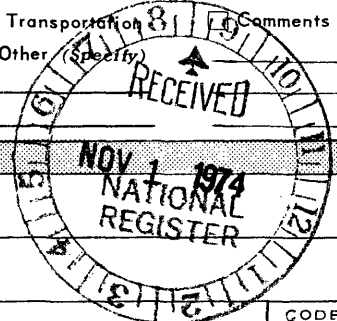
STATE: Kentucky CODE: 021 COUNTY: Fayette CODE: 067

3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Object <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Structure	<input type="checkbox"/> Public <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	Public Acquisition: <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress	Yes: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input type="checkbox"/> No

PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural	<input type="checkbox"/> Government	<input type="checkbox"/> Park	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation
<input type="checkbox"/> Commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> Industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify)
<input type="checkbox"/> Educational	<input type="checkbox"/> Military	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Religious	
<input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	



4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME:  
First Presbyterian Church

STREET AND NUMBER:  
171 Market Street

CITY OR TOWN:  
Lexington

STATE: Kentucky CODE: 021

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC:  
Fayette County Courthouse

STREET AND NUMBER:  
CITY OR TOWN:  
Lexington

STATE: Kentucky CODE: 021

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY:  
Survey of Historic Sites in Kentucky (Supplement)

DATE OF SURVEY: 1971  Federal  State  County  Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:  
Kentucky Heritage Commission

STREET AND NUMBER:  
401 Wapping Street

CITY OR TOWN:  
Frankfort

STATE: Kentucky CODE: 021

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7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	<input type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unaltered		<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site	

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The best description of the church building when new as well as now, in spite of minor alterations, appeared in the Lexington Observer and Reporter on May 8, 1872. It seems likely that this description, given in full below, was written by the architect himself. Of particular interest is the emphasis in the opening sentences on the plainness of the Gothic Revival design. Surely this was intended to correspond to a certain restraint in the Presbyterian makeup, in spite of the impressive size and careful workmanship of the structure.

"It is a plain Gothic Structure, built of brick neatly oiled and pencilled. The doors and windows of the facade and tower have cut stone hood mouldings, and the buttresses cut stone sloping copings. The front gables are also covered with cut stone copings supported by cut stone and brick corbels. Further than this no attempt was made at external decoration. The building is 58 feet wide and 85 feet long including the buttresses. The tower projects 5 feet and a projection in the rear 5½, making the entire length 98 feet. The tower is 18 feet square and 100 feet high to apex of gables, the square from apex of tower gables to top of lightning rod is 80 feet, making the whole height 180 feet. The entrance to the interior is by three doors in the facade. The two doors on the right and left of the tower, lead to the basement room; also, by winding stairs to the main floor, (together with a broad flight of steps from the central door) landing in a lobby extending across the front of the Church. The stairs named above have thirteen risers each and are broad and easy of ascent. From the lobby three doors open into the audience room, and a flight of stairs on each side of the tower leads to the gallery. The audience room is 50 feet 8 inches by 54 feet 5 inches long on the main floor, exclusive of recess for rostrum at the rear end, of room. The ceiling is 31 feet high from the floor and is grained; the main vault being a semi-ellipse intersected by gothic vaults over the windows and recesses in front and rear. The grains are covered with moulded ribs meeting under richly ornamented bosses in the middle. The ceiling is supported by corbels projecting from the face of the walls on a line with the spring of window arches.

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"The windows, on account of their proportions and beautiful stained glass, form a very attractive feature of the audience room. All of the wood work of this room including wainscoting, pews, pulpit, pulpit steps, and gallery front, is of oak, ash, and walnut in varnish, and is arranged to produce a very pleasing effect. The seats and backs of the pews are upholstered

(continued)

**SIGNIFICANCE**

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- |  |                                       |  |                                       |
|--|---------------------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Columbian | <input type="checkbox"/> 16th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 18th Century            | <input type="checkbox"/> 20th Century |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 15th Century  | <input type="checkbox"/> 17th Century | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 19th Century |                                       |

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) **1872**

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- |  |   |   |  |
|--|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal              | <input type="checkbox"/> Education              | <input type="checkbox"/> Political                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric             | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic                | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry               | <input type="checkbox"/> Science                        | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture             | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention              | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture                      | _____                                    |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian            | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature             | <input type="checkbox"/> Theater                        | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commerce                | <input type="checkbox"/> Military               | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation                 | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications          | <input type="checkbox"/> Music                  |   |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation            |   |   |  |

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The history of the First Presbyterian Church in Lexington is extensively documented in the Annals, published by the Reverend Robert Sanders on the occasion of the congregation's 175th anniversary in 1959, although the minutes of the Session from 1784 to 1891 are lost. However, the First Church is the oldest institution in Lexington having a continuous existence, and it has played a prominent role in the community throughout that span. As a result, most events associated with its history, including the erection of the present church building in 1870-72, are amply documented.

The Presbyterian Church in America was from the first identified with the "Scotch-Irish" who contributed so much to the settlement and early development of Kentucky. The origin of the Presbyterian Church in Lexington, originally known as Mount Zion Church, centers around the Reverend Adam Rankin, a highly controversial clergyman from western Pennsylvania. Shortly after his ordination he arrived in Lexington on October 1, 1784, and, according to Davidson, "immediately found himself surrounded by a large congregation. It is related that on sacramental occasions, when the number was swelled by persons from contiguous parts of the country, not less than five hundred communicants attended."

Nevertheless, there was a considerable amount of dissatisfaction with Rankin, whom the congregation shared with the Pisgah Church in what is now Woodford County. He was officially criticized by the Lexington congregation in 1789, petitions against him were circulated at Pisgah in 1791, and the Presbytery finally disposed him from all ministerial functions in 1792. He later, in 1797, built a rival "Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church" in Lexington, and spent much of his later years in litigation over the 190-acre property on which he had built the original Mount Zion Church.

(continued)

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

**9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

J. Winston Coleman, Jr., The Squire's Sketches of Lexington (Lexington: The Henry Clay Press, 1972), pp. 30, 47, 54, 55, 56.  
 Rexford Newcomb, Architecture in Old Kentucky (Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 1953).  
 The Rev. Robert Sanders, D.D., Annals of the First Presbyterian Church, Lexington, Kentucky 1784-1959 (Louisville, Ky.: The Dunne Press, 1959); source of quotation from The Lexington Observer & Reporter (May 8, 1872).

**10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA (continued)**

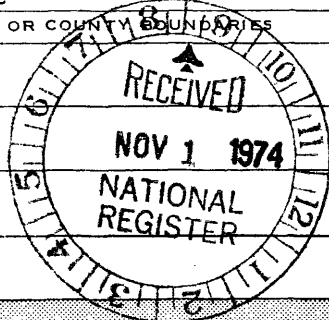
LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY				OR	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES							
CORNER	LATITUDE				LONGITUDE			LATITUDE			LONGITUDE	
	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds
NW	°	'	"	°	'	"	38°	2'	56"	84°	29'	48"
NE	°	'	"	°	'	"						
SE	°	'	"	°	'	"						
SW	°	'	"	°	'	"						

UTM  
16/719010  
4214020

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: **.5 acre**

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE



SEE INSTRUCTIONS

**11 FORM PREPARED BY**

NAME AND TITLE: **Mrs. Lawrence C. Brewer, Member** W.E.L.

ORGANIZATION: **Kentucky Heritage Commission** DATE: **Sept., 1974**

STREET AND NUMBER: **221 Henry Clay Boulevard**

CITY OR TOWN: **Lexington** STATE: **Kentucky** CODE: **40502**

CODE: **021**

**12 STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION**

As the designated State Liaison Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National  State  Local

Name Eldred W. Melton

Title State Liaison Officer

Date 10-29-74

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

A. P. Mortenson  
 Director, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date 12/30/74

ATTEST: [Signature]  
 Keeper of The National Register

Date DEC 27 1974



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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7. Description (continued)

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in the most substantial manner in crimson rep and curled hair and the entire floor covered with a fine double English Brussels, red and black carpet.

"The gallery on each side of the tower is provided with comfortable pews, and owing to the perfect ventilation from the windows and the admirable acoustic qualities of the room, is a very desirable part of the house to sit in. The central part of the gallery projects into the audience room and is intended for the choir; immediately in the rear and running into the tower is a large space for the organ. The audience room and gallery is principally lighted by a chandelier of the most beautiful and modern pattern having 30 burners. The house is to be heated by two furnaces to be located in the cellar of the tower. All the work is thoroughly and admirably done.

"The excavations were made by Melzi George; the rubble masonry by Tom Dargavel; brickwork by G. D. Wilgus; cut stone work by Hummel & Son, Cin., O.; carpenters work by F. Bush & Son; plastering by B. F. Hall & Co.; painting by C. W. Foushee; tin work by M. S. Thompson; gas fittings, John A. Geary; slating by F. Bush & Son; pews and pulpit by Grant & Co., Richmond, Ind.; upholstering by J. W. Patterson.

"The addition of a three thousand dollar organ to the interior appointments of the edifice will render the First Presbyterian Church of Lexington one of the most beautiful and attractive places of worship in the West."

An early engraving shows the west front of the church as it was originally conceived, although it never was surrounded by trees as here portrayed, the Henry Clay Law Office and other buildings flanking the church from the start. Otherwise, the exterior except for the rear and a modern roof is almost identical to its original appearance. The sympathetic use of the material, brick, should be noted, especially in the corbelled cornices. The cut stone trim is used sparingly but effectively. The transition between the four gables of the square tower and the octagonal spire is made with no pretension of subtlety but nevertheless succeeds as a striking urbanistic feature. The placement of the tower and facade directly on the sidewalk is overwhelming

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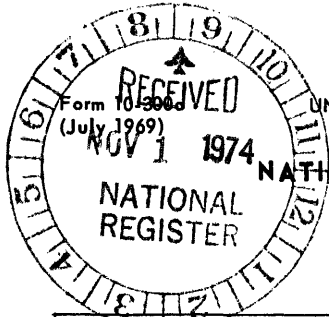
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but perhaps realistic for a cramped city site.

The interior lobby also leaves little room for display, but the plain staircases that wind from basement to gallery make for efficient circulation. The sanctuary is essentially a large auditorium, but given a Victorian ecclesiastical flavor by the improbably wide span of the "groin vaults" which, contrary to the contemporary description, are of plaster suspended from huge timber trusses under the roof rather than "supported" on the minuscule but well-designed corbels. The altered rhythm of the triple arches at front and rear of the hall provides a slight emphasis on the recessed "rostrum" and large arch under the base of the tower (the organ has been moved from the rear of the church to the area behind the altar). The original stencilled (not stained) glass windows have been replaced except in the gallery, where they remain in exceptionally good condition, their garish complementary colors somewhat mitigated by the all-over geometrical stencil patterns. During extensive redecoration and modernization of the utilities in 1896-98 the windows along the side were filled with pictorial "art glass." The central window on the north side, however, is a superb and subtle Tiffany design of pearly grays and amber tones, emblematic rather than narrative and vaguely Celtic in its intertwining bands. At this time also the upholstered pews were replaced by the present less plush ones, and a more muted rug was substituted for the Brussels carpet. The chandeliers and sconces were created after the Second World War. A good deal of the original woodwork survives, however, apparently with the specified walnut finish: the wainscoating, parapet and steps, gallery front, and several impressive chairs. In spite of the changes made over the years, the interior of the sanctuary as well as the exterior has remained essentially the same as the architect intended.

(In 1897 the chancel of the sanctuary was extended sixteen feet toward Market Street.)





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8. Significance

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The exact date of the original Mount Zion Church building, no doubt a log structure, is not known, although it was being enlarged in 1788 when several notices appeared in the Kentucky Gazette requesting immediate payment of subscriptions in bacon, hemp, linen, wheat, or corn.

Rankin had built the first church outside the limits of Lexington as it was at the time, because in Virginia before the Revolution no "dissenters" were allowed a house of worship in a county seat. By 1787 the congregation desired a church in town and the site of the former town graveyard was split between the Presbyterians and the Baptists. However, the former preferred a lot on the Public Square. This site was approved by the Town Trustees in 1791 and a brick or stone church was built there. Ironically, this location seemed too close to the commercial center of town by 1807, so the congregation sold their lot and moved to a handsome new brick church farther from downtown; from a contemporary description it seems to have belonged to the New England type of Wren-Gibbs-inspired meeting-house.

This building was razed and replaced in 1857 by a structure Gothic in form, Grecian in detail, and Romanesque in fenestration, according to an old engraving. A week after the dedication of the church in May, 1857, the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of America was convened in it. Less than a decade later, however, in 1866, the Presbytery of West Lexington was divided into the Northern Presbyterian Church and the Southern Presbyterian Church.

For a time both the First and Second Churches in Lexington had divided allegiance with a total of four ministers, but it was decided amicably in 1869 that those of Southern persuasion attend the First and those of Northern, the Second. The First Church sold its building and property in 1870, but was not able to move into the new building until 1872. According to Coleman, the total cost of the lot, building, and fixtures was approximately \$50,000. The congregation has continued in this structure to the present day, with few alterations but a number of unobtrusive additions to the rear. Although now adjacent to the revitalized downtown area of the rapidly-expanding city, the tower of the church by its height retains a prominent place in the Lexington skyline.

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The building provides a transition between the downtown commercial area and the quiet enclave of historic Gratz Park, with the famous Hunt-Morgan House only half a block away. A vivid and poignant contrast between early 19th-century Federal scale and that of the High Victorian post-Civil War period was recently regained with the uncovering (from within a three-story Victorian structure) and restoration of the Henry Clay Law Office, which virtually nestles beside the church's soaring buttresses.

Although associated with leading citizens of Lexington from the beginning until the present (Adam Rankin's own house has been preserved as the oldest in the city), the building is also outstanding architecturally in its own right. It is the surviving masterpiece of its architect, Cincinnatus Shryock (1816-88), the younger brother of Gideon Shryock (1802-80), the noted Kentucky architect who introduced the Greek Revival mode to the Commonwealth. Both sons no doubt benefited from early experience with their father, Mathias, a prominent Lexington builder. Although Gideon was evidently highly precocious, studying with William Strickland in Baltimore at an early age and winning the competitions for the design of the Kentucky State Capitol in Frankfort in rivalry with his master in 1827, it is possible that Cincinnatus had a much longer-sustained career and perhaps was as much respected by his contemporaries as his elder brother, if not more so. Whereas Gideon, after a series of prominent early projects, seems to have tapered off during his long and troubled later life, Cincinnatus maintained his productivity, and also his stylistic flexibility, until late in his career. Among other buildings he designed, according to Coleman, were the Centenary Methodist Church (1869-70, still standing), the Odd Fellows Hall or Opera House (1856, destroyed by fire 1886), and a number of residences. Most of his work was in Lexington, although he also is believed to have practiced in Frankfort and other nearby Kentucky towns.

As the Lexington Observer & Reporter put it on May 8, 1872, three days after the dedication of the First Presbyterian Church, "In the erection of this beautiful ornament to our city, Mr. C. Shryock, the architect, had made a noble monument to his own skill and good taste."



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9. Bibliographical References (Continued)

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Sue McClelland Thierman, in A Presbyterian Celebration, the 175th Anniversary, First Presbyterian Church, Lexington, Kentucky, 1784-1959 (Lexington, 1959).



First Presbyterian Church

