

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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RECEIVED JUN 25 1980
DATE ENTERED AUG 11 1980

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC Second Presbyterian Church

AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

460 East Main Street (at Ransom Avenue)

— NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Lexington

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

6th

— VICINITY OF

STATE

Kentucky

CODE

021

COUNTY

Fayette

CODE

067

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE	
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL	<input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Second Presbyterian Church, Inc.

STREET & NUMBER

460 East Main Street

CITY, TOWN

Lexington

STATE

Kentucky 40507

— VICINITY OF

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Fayette County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

West Main Street

CITY, TOWN

Lexington

STATE

Kentucky

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

Kentucky Historic Resources Inventory

DATE

February, 1980

— FEDERAL STATE — COUNTY — LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

Kentucky Heritage Commission

CITY, TOWN

Frankfort

STATE

Kentucky

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Second Presbyterian Church is set, facing north (compass directions are used in the following description), on the corner of East Main St. (the Richmond Road)--the major thoroughfare and residential boulevard of the fashionable eastern end of Lexington--and Ransom Avenue, a cross street that separates the church property from a one-story brick automobile dealership to the west--the last outpost of the downtown commercial area, although even the predominantly residential section eastward on Main St. has a number of 20th-century commercial structures along it, as well as several churches; a funeral home (a converted residence) and low office structure are opposite Second Presbyterian. The spire of the church is visible from the downtown although it is not particularly high and in spite of the commercial structures in that direction. The ample grounds, with large trees (some so overgrown they interrupt any full views of the church and even of the facade), do provide some sense of isolation and even a suburban quality around the church buildings; its own parking lots have discreetly been kept at the rear, with access off Central Avenue behind.

The sanctuary, four bays deep, and narthex are fairly narrow, with the shallow transepts broadening the vessel near the south end (photo 2). The original education building is somewhat wider, with side entrances south of the transepts and on a line with the chancel-choir. The off-center tower rises south of the west transept above the entrance pavilion. The facilities wing has three basic elements, with slightly projecting gabled center section facing south (photos 3 and 4). An attractive oriel in the original rector's study on the middle of the three stories of this wing also helps divide the west facade into three parts. The 1957 educational addition extends some distance south from the west third of the original wing, and projects considerably toward the west along Ransom Avenue. It is of the same gray stone and with similar proportions and simplified stone trim as the original wing and sanctuary, although it has a flat roof and minimal articulation, whereas the original portions are highly articulated by triple-tier stone buttresses, which form one of the chief elements of visual interest as well as, presumably, support. All visible roofs are slate with copper flashing.

The sanctuary presents an unusually narrow front to Main Street (photo 1). One of the most striking features of the overall design is the re-entrant corners between the nave and the shallow vestibule or narthex, as well as the transepts, which have absolutely plain stone wall-surfaces except for the shoulders of the buttresses that define them (photo 3). The small entrance porch, barely ample to provide for the openings of the two doors, is under a shallow terrace with a carved parapet, and in fact is partly recessed under the balcony; the great north (liturgical west) window rises from the terrace between crocketed colonnettes below the horizontally-defined gable. The two main entrance doors are set close together, occupying most of the available inner wall; two gently pointed outer arches rest on a slender central clustered column and pilasters. The porch is flanked by solid wall surfaces pierced by small, high windows beside the gabled buttresses that define the front. This facade composition is the most ornamented portion of the exterior, with picturesquely carved rosettes and other emblems set along the concave moldings of the entrance arches, the base of the parapet, and quatrefoil panels with blank shields on the parapet and in the decorated frame and tracery of the west window. The entrance doors are very handsome, with decorative iron hinges scored in a criss-cross pattern across their surfaces. All three edges of the doors have subtle chamfers, both inside and out.

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The sides of the nave are quite plastic, with stepped buttresses between the four bays; the pointed arches of the windows are emphasized by the plain raked stone frames, without any moldings whatsoever; this sets the keynote of nearly all the openings except those on the tower and north front (where even the tiny stair-windows have ogival chamfers on the lintels). The basement openings have segmental arches; those of the education wing are square-headed, mostly grouped with two to four windows in bands, all with plain raked frames.

The tower develops from multiple buttresses flanking the carved arch over the west entrance pavilion, with a single major story at roof level pierced by double lancets with roundels like the transept windows; above, a band of ashlar masonry with recessed arched panels has canted corners over the crockets of the main story. The slate roof slopes inward to the base of the fairly steep octagonal spire, which is surmounted by a tall copper weathervane topped by a large rooster or "Chanticleer." Interesting but not overwhelming in itself, the tower composes well with the tapered octagonal copper ventilator lantern over the implied crossing and with the gables of the transepts and front (photo 2).

The vestibule is a small, low-ceiling room with delicately panelled wainscot (perhaps not original like some of the other floor and wall surfaces), stone surrounds to the double doors from the porch, and shallow arches at the ends and leading to the narrow winding staircase to the balcony above. Three doors lead to the space at the back of the nave, which now serves as a secondary vestibule under the projecting balcony. The balcony, which crosses at midpoint the windows of the first bay of the nave, rests on two striking pillars, of grooved wood with truncated sections of moldings at right angles serving as capitals. The balcony railing has similar strong moldings at the base and a panelled parapet.

The compactness of the porch and narthex make all the more dramatic the size and sweep of the sanctuary (photo 5). It is basically a single vessel, with the choir and organ set within an almost round-arched chancel recess that reaches virtually to the ceiling, and plain, shallow two-bay transepts that barely interrupt the main wall surfaces and roof. The balcony is full-width, but ascends over the narthex and porch through a broad arch that frames the pointed and elaborately traceried north window. The main feature of the interior is the great roof, which rests on huge broad timber arches that have only the slightest point at the center. The arches, with their modest kingpost trusses above, spring from stone corbels suggesting sliced-off moldings (photo 6), except for those over the transepts, which are supported by beam-ends that divide the bays of the transepts; these bays are slightly narrower than those of the nave proper, providing an accelerated rhythm toward the chancel. The stained ceiling consists of tongue-in-groove boards with minimal joists; those over the choir and balcony form a smaller grid pattern. One of the most striking features is the "dying" of the pointed arches over the windows into the jambs (see photo 6)--a simple but novel device carried out in the (original) recessed radiator compartments below.

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The plaster walls are painted white with limestone trim in the chancel arch (or irregular width below the impost line, which is marked by carved angel corbels supporting the intrados); the low doors with octagonal colonnettes that flank the chancel arch; the junction of nave and transepts; the highly simplified tracery of the double-lancet windows; and the octagonal baptismal font which is set at one end of the lectern platform and has a delightful removable cover of pierced wood (photo 7). Although rather simple and understated in layout, the chancel features extremely well-designed and carved oak woodwork, climaxing in the elaborate and exquisite organ case, with its projecting flamboyant screen. The communion table (not altar) is literally a table, carved in an architectonic manner and set before the low, shallow platform on which are the elegant reading desk that rises from the floor, and the five elders' chairs; these are set against the front of the raised choir. All these wooden elements have delicately carved tracery, particularly using sections of moldings as trim, sometimes in a quite inventive and even fanciful manner. The original drawings include a number of carved details that have not been executed, including wooden bosses on the joints of the panels in the chancel roof, thistles on the faces of the stone corbels, angels on the wood corbels over the transepts, bands of tracery at the base of the nave roof, perhaps concave moldings in the window surrounds, foliage in the spandrels of the truncated transept arches, and shields above the supports of the balcony. The lack of these details, however, even though they would have been discreet and well-placed, increases the boldness of the overall design and allows the handsome basic forms to make their own effect.

The interior of the sanctuary is also unified and adorned by a very impressive series of stained-glass windows, which were provided as memorials during 1946-1951, replacing the original white frosted glass panels with diagonal leading. The present windows, with their dark but bright colors and large-scale stylized biblical figures in angular patterns, were designed and made by the noted Cincinnati, Ohio, firm of John C. Riordan and Stephen Bridges.

The floor of the nave is cork, with a diagonal checkerboard of light and darker cork tiles; much of it is in poor condition and needs to be replaced (one hopes with the equivalent material). The chandeliers are rather simple low cylinders with limited pierced patterns; although with modern lighting systems (supplemented by concealed floodlights on the chancel) they appear to be original. A small inconspicuous mechanical chamber has been inserted on the west side of the balcony. The 1929 Skinner organ was rebuilt and expanded in 1979.

The original education wing retains a good deal of its original woodwork and the like, although considerably altered internally. The stairhalls inside the side entrances have Gothic wrought-iron railings and serpentine wooden hand-rails along the walls; that on the west side has a handsome broad bevelled arch at the first landing.

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The most important room was the assembly hall at the center of the south end of the third floor (photo 8). It had a gabled roof over the triple lancets facing south, with a truss system now mostly embedded in an acoustical tile ceiling: tall folding panelled doors flank the gabled central bay. Low Sunday school rooms opened into this assembly area, probably with folding doors, so that the classes could either meet separately or join in a worship service. The windows here and elsewhere are deeply recessed from inside, with small-paned sash. Particularly appealing is the original rector's study in the center of the west side, with a band of windows breaking into a bay in the middle, and window seats below. The overall effect of these interiors is charming, but unaffected.

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was among the more impressive examples of the mid-19th-century Gothic Revival in the city; it was designed by Major Thomas Lewinski and built in 1846 by John McMurtry, who perhaps also had a hand in the design.

Although contemporary periodical references to this work have not been found, the present church is illustrated in Douglass Shand Tucci's recent essay, Ralph Adams Cram, American Medievalist. Tucci's diminutive view of the church from the northwest (Fig. 18 on the foldout plate showing "Gothic Work") nevertheless shows the entire composition prior to the overgrowth of foliage that now makes it impossible to appreciate the relationship between the facade, nave, transepts, and tower, or the composition as a whole. This composition--perhaps not altogether successful, as the elements seem somewhat detached and even competitive--was apparently unique in the firm's work, although the somewhat unusual spire form also appears in St. James' (Episcopal) Church, Lake Delaware, N.Y. (Fig. 25).

Tucci also provides a bibliography both of Cram's own numerous writing on architecture and other matters, which promoted his earnest view of ecclesiastical architecture and spread his contemporary renown, and of writings about him and the firm, which have tended to be sparse until the recent revival of interest in the Beaux-Arts, Collegiate Gothic, and other "Traditional" revival styles of the early 20th century.

It should be noted that the Second Presbyterian Church in Lexington was designed well after Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue (1869-1924) left the firm, previously known as Cram, Ferguson & Goodhue, in 1914. Although Goodhue was most admired as a designer and renderer particularly of details, and has retained some reputation even among modernist architects and historians because of the less historicist character of some of his later, independent work, especially the Nebraska State Capitol, Tucci has re-emphasized that much of the credit for the firm's best designs, even during Goodhue's partnership, must go to Cram. Moreover, working drawings for the Second Presbyterian Church remain in the hands of the church and its architects; they were approved by Cram's other long-time partner, Frank W. Ferguson (1861-1926). This may mean that he was the actual designer, as Withey states in his biography (pp. 207-208): "In later years each partner was independently responsible for specific buildings, although commissions were executed under the firm name." Ferguson is credited with a major role in the design of many noted educational structures and complexes, including those of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, N.Y., and others at the Rice Institute in Houston, Williams College, and Princeton University.

The drawings were also initialled by Frank E. Cleveland (1878-1950), who joined the firm in 1895, became a full partner after Ferguson's death (shortly after the design of Second Presbyterian), and was the senior partner of the firm after Cram's

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death; he seems to have specialized in ecclesiastical work from his first involvement with the firm's major works, the Cathedral of St. John the Divine and St. Thomas Episcopal Church in New York City. Whoever the actual designer was, the Second Presbyterian Church is a noble and representative example of the firm's work, the climax of Gothic Revival architecture in Lexington, and a fitting home for its active and substantial congregation.

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"A Ministry in Lovely Stained Glass Windows." Lexington: Second Presbyterian Church, 1953.

Perrin, William Henry, ed. History of Fayette County, Kentucky. Chicago: O.L. Baskin & Co., 1882.

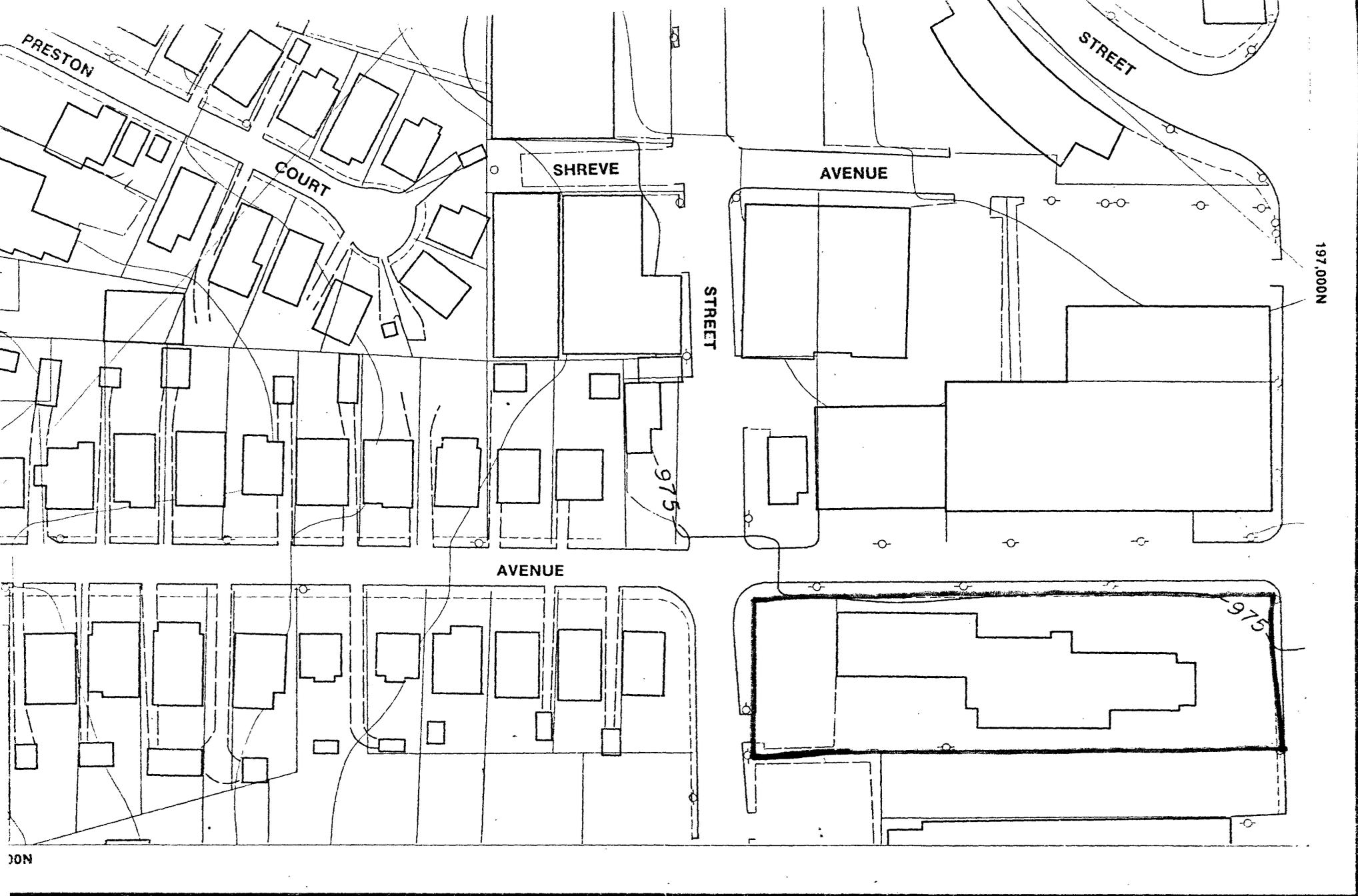
Sanders, The Rev. Robert Stuart, DD. History of the Second Presbyterian Church, Lexington, Kentucky, of the United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., 1815-1965. Lexington: Second Presbyterian Church, 1965.

Tucci, Douglass Shand. Ralph Adams Cram, American Medievalist. Boston: Boston Public Library, 1975.

Withey, Henry F. and Elsie Rathburn. Biographical Dictionary of American Architects (Deceased). 1956; reprinted 1970 by Hennessey & Ingalls, Inc., Los Angeles.

Newspaper articles indexed at the Lexington Public Library.

Other materials supplied by the church, including copies of original working drawings.



2nd Presbyterian Church

Second Presbyterian Church

Lexington
460 East Main Street
Fayette
Kentucky

Urban-County Planning Commission Map

Scale - 1" = 400'

Date - 1976; updated 1980

Map 2

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