

VLR-6/13/01

NRHP-1/24/02

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**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 *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. 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 entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete an item.

1. Name of Property

historic name **First Baptist Church of Covington, Virginia**
other names/site number **First Baptist Church; VDHR file no. 107-0039**

2. Location

street & number **337 South Lexington Avenue** N/A not for publication
city or town **Covington** N/A vicinity
state **Virginia** code **VA** county **Covington (Indep. City)** code **580** zip code **24426**

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, 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 ___ nationally ___ statewide **X** locally. (___ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

M. Catherine Kussner 10/16/01
Signature of certifying official/Title Date
VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF HISTORIC RESOURCES
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting or other official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

_____ entered in the National Register. _____ See continuation sheet.	_____	_____
_____ determined eligible for the National Register. _____ See continuation sheet.	_____	_____
_____ determined not eligible for the National Register. _____ removed from the National Register.	_____	_____
_____ other (explain): _____	_____	_____

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

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

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>2</u>	<u>1</u>	buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>2</u>	<u>1</u>	Total

Name of related multiple property listing

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

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Category	Subcategory
RELIGION	religious facility (church)
EDUCATION	school
EDUCATION	education-related

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Category	Subcategory
RELIGION	religious facility (church)
RELIGION	church-related residence
VACANT/NOT IN USE	

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

- Gothic
- Colonial Revival
- Modern Movement

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

- foundation Brick
- walls Brick
- roof Asphalt
- other Stone
- Concrete
- Glass

Narrative Description

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

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

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

- X 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:

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

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

ETHNIC HERITAGE: BLACK

Period of Significance

Ca. 1890-1951

Significant Dates

Ca. 1890
1911

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

James R. Hunter & Sons (builder)

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- 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
#

Primary location of additional data:

- X State Historic Preservation Office
Other State agency
Federal agency
Local government
University
Other

Name of repository:

10. Geographical DataAcreage of Property approximately 0.7 acres**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
1	17	588640	4	182400	
2	17		3	17	
			4	17	

See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description

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

Boundary Justification

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

11. Form Prepared By

name/title	<u>J. Daniel Pezzoni</u>	date	<u>March 6, 2001</u>
organization	<u>Landmark Preservation Associates</u>	telephone	<u>(540) 464-5315</u>
street & number	<u>6 Houston St.</u>	zip code	<u>24450</u>
city or town	<u>Lexington</u> state <u>VA</u>		

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets**Maps**A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.**Photographs**Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.**Additional items**

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

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

name	<u>Trustees of First Baptist Church</u>		
street & number	<u>337 S. Lexington Ave.</u>	telephone	<u>(540) 965-4416</u>
city or town	<u>Covington</u> state <u>VA</u>	zip code	<u>24426</u>

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. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

**First Baptist Church of Covington, Virginia
Covington, Va.**

Section number 7 Page 1

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

Summary

The nominated parcel of First Baptist Church of Covington, Virginia (generally known as First Baptist Church) comprises three closely situated buildings: the third church building, the one presently used by the congregation, built in 1911 at 337 South Lexington Avenue; the second church building, built ca. 1890 on the 300 block of South Maple Avenue and now vacant and in disrepair; and a parsonage built in 1966 at 333 South Lexington Avenue. The southwest-facing 1911 church is a one-story brick edifice combining Gothic and Colonial Revival stylistic elements, with a corner belfry tower, an asphalt-shingled gable roof, stained-glass windows, and a two-story rear education wing added in 1955. Interior features include triple lancet chancel arches, a basement fellowship hall, and modernist details in the education wing. The northeast-facing ca. 1890 church is a four-bay nave-plan building of light frame construction with an asphalt-shingled front-gable roof, asbestos shingle siding over weatherboards, a 1990s front porch, an original gallery, and a 1952 stage and proscenium. The 1966 parsonage is a one-story Ranch-style house of brick-veneer frame construction and modernist detail.

The three conjoined lots on which the buildings stand (see Exhibit A) are planted in grass with a clipped hedge along Lexington, herring-bone brick sidewalks along Lexington and Pine, and several concrete walkways. Fronting the 1911 church is a system of concrete and brick steps and lamp pedestals constructed in 1941 and altered after 1955. A gravel alley laid out in 1895 passes between the 1911 church and parsonage and the ca. 1890 church. The property is located in the midst of Covington's principal historic African American neighborhood surrounded on the northwest and south by one- and two-story dwellings dating from about 1890 through the 1930s. To the southeast stand several large modern warehouses. The CSX rail line (C&O in the nineteenth century) passes to the northeast on the opposite side of Maple.

Inventory

1. Church. 1911; 1941; 1955. Contributing building.
2. Church. Ca. 1890; 1952; late 20th c. Contributing building.
3. Parsonage. 1966. Noncontributing building.

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First Baptist Church of Covington, Virginia
Covington, Va.

Description (continued)

1911 Church Exterior

The 1911 church displays stretcher-bond construction on its principal southwest and southeast elevations with six-course American-bond construction of coarser brick on its northwest and northeast elevations. The brickwork on the stretcher-bond elevations changes from red to a slightly orange cast at eaves level. The brick foundation has a concrete parging scored in imitation of ashlar masonry. Most windows have lancet arches with stone imposts and keystones and contain marbled stained glass in a variety of colors (yellow predominating). In the eaves and elsewhere on the facade are bracketed dentil cornices, and dentil moldings rise with the raking cornices of the gables.

In form the building is essentially cruciform, with modestly projecting gabled wings on all four sides. The front projection features a three-tier tower at its south corner and a porch at its west corner. Each tier of the tower has lancet-arched openings and recessed surfaces. The lowest tier has two entries with double-leaf panel doors and stained-glass transoms. The middle tier has blond brick corbeling and paired windows with textured clear glass. The upper tier has wooden louvered openings for the belfry, belt courses of blond brick, and projecting piers at the corners of the parapet that were formerly capped by pointed finials (probably metal, possibly octagonal in section, with balls at their points).

The porch at the west corner has a pedimented gable and round-arched openings with stone imposts and keystones, and it shelters an entry with a double-leaf panel door and round-arched stained-glass transom. Other exterior features include circular gable windows with surrounds of four stone keystone-like elements, two-light basement windows, and an integral furnace flue on the southeast elevation.

Extending from the front of the church to the sidewalk is a system of concrete steps flanked by classically-inspired brick and concrete lamp pedestals topped by modern electric coach lamps. One of the pedestals bears a concrete inscription plaque that reads "Y.M.I.C. of FBC/Nov 4 1941". A mid-nineteenth-century photograph shows that the pedestals were originally closely set (the one with the plaque was subsequently moved southward) and supported globe-shaped milk-glass lamps. In 1995 a steel wheelchair lift was installed next to the steps leading to the porch.

The 1955 addition is constructed of five-course American-bond brickwork with a flat roof and a parged cinder-block foundation. The tall square-headed windows on the front (southeast) elevation have wood muntins forming a cross figure. The windows on the northeast side elevation

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First Baptist Church of Covington, Virginia
Covington, Va.

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Description (continued)

have stacked panes. The main entry has a double-leaf door sheltered under a wooden canopy with a triangular support, and there are two basement entries.

1911 Church Interior

The main level is largely taken up by the seating area, which is oriented to a shallow chancel at the northeast end. The sloping wood floor, covered with red carpeting, radiates in three planes from the center of the chancel. The ceiling has a plaster finish, as do the walls above a beaded matchboard wainscot with a molded chairrail. The coved plaster cornice is defined by thick plaster moldings at top and bottom. The wainscot, door and window trim, and other wooden trim is varnished oak. Each of the three non-chancel walls features a single large stained-glass window, the one on the front (southwest) wall with wood tracery. This window is flanked by the porch entry and by double-leaf doors from a vestibule at the base of the corner tower. The large windows on the two other walls are flanked by smaller windows and have tracery designs created by the came and color pattern of the glass. Sections of the two windows were reinstalled upside-down after cleaning in the 1960s or 1970s, as is evident from their design and from a medallion in the southeast window that portrays an upside-down anchor.

The chancel wall has three lancet-arched openings (the middle one slightly larger than the ones flanking it) with a low dais in front. The recess behind the center arch contains a concrete baptistry (installed in place of an earlier one in the early 1970s) with a glass front and a back wall painted with a scene of a river and mountains at sunrise (the mural was painted in the mid-to late 1980s). In the recess to the right are organ pipes and chimes formerly connected to a Geo. Kilgen & Sons Petit Ensemble organ with Maas Cathedral Chimes setting that now stands in front of the dais. The ornate stained oak pulpit has an octagonal form. Square-headed doorways at the back of the left and right recesses lead to the 1955 addition. Other features of the main floor include curved bench seats of Gothic design, a corner basement stair with turned balustrade, pendant lights with bronzed fittings and cream and tan marbled panes, circular metal ceiling diffusers, and a pendant mid-twentieth-century RCA speaker. The basement, which is used as the M. F. Robinson Fellowship Hall, features a concrete floor painted red and scored into approximately five-foot squares, metal pole supports, modern wood paneling on the walls, and a kitchen remodeled in the 1990s.

The main level of the 1955 education wing is largely taken up by an auditorium used for Sunday school classes, vacation Bible school, and plays. It has a red carpeted floor, plaster walls, and an acoustic tile ceiling crossed by roof beams. At the southeast end is a gallery with a

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First Baptist Church of Covington, Virginia
Covington, Va.

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Description (continued)

modernistic screen of slender wooden uprights below and a solid plywood balcony railing with an applied design of interlocking rectangles above. Behind the gallery are stairs with metal handrails for access to the balcony and basement. At the northwest end of the space is a low stage and another gallery with an identical balcony railing but solid below. The basement has a double-loaded corridor flanked by classrooms, painted cinder-block walls, and a floor with red and black checkerboard composition tiles.

Ca. 1890 Church Exterior

The ca. 1890 church is rectangular in form with four tall six-over-six windows on each side and a front entry with sidelights and glass-panel double-leaf doors. The entry was shifted to the left from its original central position, probably about 1970, and two single-pane windows were inserted on the front elevation. A shed-roofed porch shelters the off-center entry and replaces a 1952 gabled porch formerly centered on the facade (the present porch incorporates pilaster posts from the earlier porch). Above are two lancet-arched windows and above them a pedimented gable with a circular wooden medallion with sawn tracery ornament. The building has a foundation of stone piers with an infill of cinder block and brick. A 1952 cinder-block bathroom wing extends across the rear with three-over-three windows and a hip roof with exposed rafter ends. A deteriorated concrete walkway on axis with the center of the front elevation extends to South Maple Avenue. A step at the street bears the cast inscription "YMIC 4 194-" (the last numeral of the date is broken off).

Ca. 1890 Church Interior

The interior features wood floors, sheetrock walls above a wainscot with vertical flush boards and a molded chairrail, and a ceiling originally finished with plaster and lath, later with paper tiles, and now stripped of all finish. The space is largely taken up by a seating area oriented to a 1952 stage and proscenium at the southwest end. The stage incorporates the structure of a nineteenth-century dais and has a beaded matchboard front wall. The proscenium has a basket-handle arch with floor-level doorways to right and left, and the archway and doorways are hung with maroon corduroy curtains. The green, white and pink paint scheme of the interior emphasizes the design of the proscenium and other interior features.

At the northeast end of the interior is a gallery reached by a modern pull-down ladder-stair. Under the center third of the gallery is a vestibule which retains one beaded matchboard side partition with a four-panel door (the other side partition was removed to create a kitchen under

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**First Baptist Church of Covington, Virginia
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Description (continued)

the north two thirds of the gallery). The balcony has a railing with molded panels, a shelf with painted signage reading "For Hats Only," and a 1952 projection booth. Cut nails and circular-sawn lumber are visible in the construction of the gallery. Other interior features include molded trim on the side windows that is cut off at the top, and numerous nails projecting through the roof boards indicative of former wood-shingle roofing.

Parsonage

The 1966 parsonage has stretcher-bond brick walls, an asphalt-shingled hip roof, one-over-one aluminum windows, a porch on the northwest side elevation, and an integral one-bay garage. Grouped at the south front corner are a chimney faced with tabular sandstone blocks and an entry with glass-block vestibule windows. The interior has a brick fireplace of simple modern design, sheetrock walls, paper-tile ceilings, carpeted hardwood floors, and simple wooden door and window trim.

Integrity Statement

The 1911 church possesses good integrity whereas the ca. 1890 church possesses only fair integrity as the result of modern alterations and deterioration. The original exterior character-defining features of the 1911 church are all present, as are interior features except for the original baptistery. Because of its post-1951 age, the education wing technically detracts from the integrity of the church, but its rear placement and simple design mitigate its effect. (Had the wing been four years older at the time of designation it would have been regarded as a definite enhancement to the significance of the property; see section 8.) Likewise, the 1966 parsonage technically detracts from the integrity of the property; it would have been excluded except for its acceptable role as a link between the two church buildings. The ca. 1890 church retains its overall form and most of its character-defining features, aspects that support its contributing status. However, 1952 and later modifications have added elements (front porch and windows and rear bathrooms) and obscured or altered some historic fabric (repositioned entry, asbestos shingles over weatherboards). Also, the building is threatened by neglect. Holes in the roof have resulted in deterioration of sections of the floor and have created a pigeon infestation. The congregation is considering making repairs to the building with the ultimate goal of returning it to use.

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**First Baptist Church of Covington, Virginia
Covington, Va.**

NARRATIVE STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Summary

First Baptist Church of Covington, Virginia, historically the city's largest African American congregation, was organized in 1870. The first church, built in the early 1870s, stood on the site of the second church, a ca. 1890 Gothic Revival frame building located on the 300 block of South Maple Avenue that later served as a classroom annex and cafeteria for a nearby school. In 1911 the African American construction firm James R. Hunter & Sons built the sanctuary that now serves the congregation at 337 South Lexington Avenue. The Gothic-Colonial Revival brick building of 1911, which stands near the ca. 1890 church, features a corner belfry tower, lancet-arched stained-glass windows, and a modernistic 1955 education wing designed by parishioner Forrest A. Harvey III. First Baptist Church has played an important role in the life of Covington's African American community for over a hundred years.

Applicable Criteria

First Baptist Church of Covington, Virginia meets Criterion A and is eligible in the black ethnic heritage area of significance for its association with Covington's African American community. Because the resource is a religious property that derives its primary significance from its historical importance, Criteria Consideration A is also applicable. The period of significance extends from ca. 1890, the approximate date of construction of the second church building, until 1951, embracing over six decades of the property's association with Covington's African American community. First Baptist Church is eligible at the local level of significance. Information in support of designation appears throughout the historic context.

Acknowledgments

A number of individuals and organizations assisted in the preparation of this report. Foremost among these was the owner of the property and the nomination's sponsor, First Baptist Church, represented by the Rev. William L. Cannon Jr. and a historical committee composed of parishioners Ruth Middleton, Cora S. Poteat and Kathryn Simpson. The following church members provided information: Marie Conway, Ruth Middleton, the Rev. Evelyn Spurlock, Leatha Stewart and Ardelia D. Thompson (their contributions are acknowledged in the footnotes). Others who provided assistance included June Ellis, John Kern, Michael Pulice and Marc Wagner of the Virginia Department of Historic Resources.

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First Baptist Church of Covington, Virginia
Covington, Va.

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Statement of Significance (continued)

Historic Context

First Baptist Church was organized by the Rev. Barnet of Charlottesville in May 1870. By early 1872 the church trustees had purchased a quarter-acre lot on South Maple Avenue, and in October 1874 when a portion of the lot was sold, the deed of transfer referred to a "recently erected . . . church or meeting house" on the remaining portion. Approximately twenty years later during the pastorate of Rev. E. P. Jackson a second church was built on the site of the first, and the original building was moved to a lot two doors down on South Maple Avenue (by the 1950s it had been converted into a dwelling and has since been demolished). First Baptist's second sanctuary therefore represents the congregation's earliest surviving building.¹

An idea of the composition of the early congregation can be derived from several sources including the 1874 deed and the federal censuses. The deed lists William H. Wiley, George Henry Adams, John H. Pollard and Tumbler Carter as trustees. William H. Wiley (b. ca. 1841) served as the congregation's first pastor. In May 1870, at the time of his appointment, Wiley was employed as a farm laborer in Botetourt County, but shortly thereafter he appears to have relocated to Alleghany County and taken up his pastoral duties. In March 1871 he officiated at the wedding of Edward Jones and Julia French, who appear to have been the first of many couples he wed. W. H. Wiley resigned after a number of years and was succeeded by the Rev. J. L. Beale. The other trustees were residents of Covington and the vicinity. George H. Adams (b. ca. 1847), a native of St. Mary's County, Maryland, worked as a farm laborer. His wife Lucy Barbour Adams (b. ca. 1850), whom George married in February 1870, was born in Covington and was one of the first members of the church. John Pollard and Tumbler Carter were both laborers; Pollard worked for the C&O Railroad in 1870.²

Little information survives for the church and its activities during the nineteenth century, yet

¹ Thompson, *Souvenir Journal*, 1; Kern and Giles, "First Baptist Church, Covington"; Alleghany County Deed Book 7, pp. 123 and 234; and "Gray's New Map." The congregation met in a private residence for the short period between organization and construction of the first church building. The earliest surviving history of the church, contained in the *Souvenir Journal* (1955), refers to the institution as "First Baptist Church of Covington, Virginia" (p. 1).

² Thompson, *Souvenir Journal*, 1-4; Alleghany County Deed Book 7, pp. 123; Nelson, *Marriages of Alleghany County*, 271, 292-293; and U.S. census.

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First Baptist Church of Covington, Virginia
Covington, Va.

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Statement of Significance (continued)

indications are that it played an important role in the life of Covington's African American community during its early years, as it would in later decades. In this respect First Baptist Church would have fit a national pattern. As W.E.B. DuBois wrote in 1899, "the Negro church has become a centre of social intercourse" in black society, and others have stressed the importance of black churches in economic, educational and political spheres. First Baptist appears to have been a catalyst for the physical development of Covington's South Lexington Avenue black neighborhood. Gray's map of Covington, published in 1877, shows the original church in an isolated spot at the eastern edge of the town limits, but by 1895, as depicted on a plat of that year, the church was surrounded by African American development. Nearby lots were owned by benevolent societies (Odd Fellows and Good Samaritans) and numerous householders, and a schoolhouse and drug store stood on the same block. Sanborn maps from the early twentieth century show businesses such as restaurants, a blacksmith shop, a grocery, and an undertaker in the vicinity. Black churches such as First Baptist played seminal roles in the physical development of African American neighborhoods elsewhere in the region during the period, as in Salem, Virginia.³

The First Baptist congregation purchased a lot at the north corner of South Lexington Avenue and West Pine Street in 1906 (near the old church), and in 1911 a new brick sanctuary was completed at a cost of \$13,240. The brickwork was raised by James R. Hunter & Sons, an African American construction firm based in Covington. Hunter worked on the construction of some of the first buildings at the West Virginia Pulp and Paper Company mill at Covington, established in 1899, and his son Venable Hunter was recognized for his ability in brick masonry while a student at Tuskegee Institute. (A second son, William Lewis Hunter, was also involved in the firm.) The 1911 church bears a strong resemblance to the white Covington Baptist Church (1902) at 280 West Riverside Avenue, both in overall form and in particulars such as round-arched porch openings, bracketed dentil cornices, lancet arches with stone impost and keystone blocks, and the use of blond brick accent courses in the top tier of the belfry tower. Members of First Baptist Church also attended services at Covington Baptist Church, which fact may contribute to an understanding of the architectural affinities.⁴

³ "Gray's New Map"; Alleghany County Deed Book 21, p. 241; Sanborn maps; and Long, "South of Main," 16-17.

⁴ Kern and Giles, "First Baptist Church, Covington"; Thompson, *Souvenir Journal*, 1; Kern and Pezzoni, "Covington Historic District"; Edwards, "Covington Baptist Church"; and Evelyn

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First Baptist Church of Covington, Virginia
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Statement of Significance (continued)

The principal mission of First Baptist Church was religious, but the institution also provided a number of social services to its parishioners and to the black community at large during the first half of the twentieth century. Social outreach activity was especially strong during the pastorate of Dr. J. Thomas Reid (1934-49) and was carried out through committees known as Missionary Circles. During Reid's pastorate the number of circles increased from one to six. Several of the circles were intended for specific age groups; there was a Senior Circle for older parishioners and there were two training circles for youngsters, the Royal Ambassadors Circle for boys and Reid's Circle for girls. Members of the youth circles performed services for the elderly such as running errands and chopping wood. The charity work of the adult circles also focused on the elderly and included purchases of food and fuel and providing transportation. (Lack of automobile ownership among some elderly members was a factor in the creation of Pine Street Baptist Church out of First Baptist to serve the black neighborhood on the opposite side of the C&O tracks.) Charity was especially important during the Depression, as the majority of Covington's black men were employed at the local paper mill, where layoffs were heavy.⁵

After construction of the 1911 church the ca. 1890 building continued to serve the congregation and the community. Initially the building may have gone underutilized; the Sanborn maps of 1913 and 1920 label it "vacant". The 1926 map shows a new use as a "community house". Older church members recall that the building was converted to public school use in the 1930s and the seating area divided into classrooms by temporary partitions. Later the partitions were removed and the building used as a cafeteria for Watson School, which stood nearby at Pine and Marion during the period. Visiting high school football players were provided with meals in the building by the ladies of the church. A substantial renovation was completed in 1952; asbestos-shingle siding was added to the exterior, asphalt roof shingles were nailed on by deacon and roofer Douglas Beale, a front porch, stage and proscenium were built, and a projection booth was

Spurlock, Ruth Middleton and Ardelia Thompson personal communication. The period during which First Baptist Church parishioners also attended Covington Baptist Church is unclear. Beautification of the church grounds was undertaken in 1941 by the Young Men's Improvement Club.

⁵ Kern and Giles, "First Baptist Church, Covington"; Thompson, *Souvenir Journal*, 1; and Ruth Middleton and Ardelia Thompson personal communication. Rev. Reid is also credited with planning the landscaping improvements of 1941. At present the church's Missionary Circles are combined under one umbrella organization, the First Baptist Church Missionary Society.

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Statement of Significance (continued)

installed in the gallery. After construction of the 1911 building's education wing in 1955 (see below), the old church was used on a more infrequent basis for plays and social functions and as a makeshift gymnasium. In recent decades the building has gone unused except for storage.⁶

First Baptist Church continued its historic commitment to the religious and social betterment of the Covington community during the second half of the twentieth century. The church and its members took a relatively non-demonstrative stance during the period of the Civil Rights movement and integration, working quietly but firmly on behalf of the city's black population. The most significant changes to the physical character of the church property were the construction of the education wing in 1955 and the parsonage in 1966. Both buildings were designed by parishioner Forrest A. Harvey III, a graduate of the Architectural Engineering program at North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University in Greensboro, and at the time associated with the U.S. Naval Yard in Philadelphia. Paul Flint of Covington served as contractor on the parsonage.⁷

As the one-hundred-strong congregation enters the twenty-first century, First Baptist Church remains true to its historic mission. The musical and fundraising occasions of Woman's Day, begun in 1917, and its male counterpart, begun in 1926, continue as vital institutions, and the church provides assistance to the needy as it has in the past. According to Pastor Willie Cannon, the primary objective of today's First Baptist Church is to "win souls to Christ."⁸

⁶ Sanborn maps; Leatha Stewart and Ruth Middleton personal communication; and Thompson, *Souvenir Journal*, 1.

⁷ Evelyn Spurlock and Ardelia Thompson personal communication; Kern and Giles, "First Baptist Church, Covington". Construction of the education wing began after August 31, 1955 (Thompson, *Souvenir Journal*, 19).

⁸ Rev. William L. Cannon Jr. personal communication.

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First Baptist Church of Covington, Virginia
Covington, Va.

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**First Baptist Church of Covington, Virginia
Covington, Va.**

Verbal Boundary Description

The nominated parcel embraces City of Covington tax parcel map Section 14 ((A)) parcels 16, 30 and 31 and is depicted in the 1:200-scale map that appears as Exhibit A.

Boundary Justification

The boundaries of the nominated parcel include the two contributing church buildings and the noncontributing parsonage. The parsonage is included because its lot links the two lots on which the contributing resources stand, as illustrated in Exhibit A.

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**First Baptist Church of Covington, Virginia
Covington, Va.**

Section number Photo Page 13

PHOTOGRAPHS

1. 1. Subject: First Baptist Church of Covington, Virginia (same for all photos)
2. Location: Covington, Virginia (same for all photos)
3. Photographer: J. Daniel Pezzoni (same for all photos)
4. Photo date: February 2001 (same for all photos)
5. Original negative (VDHR # 19017) archived at the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond (same for all photos)
6. Description of view: 1911 church with ca. 1890 church visible to left in background. View looking northeast.
7. Photograph number appears at beginning of entry (same for all photos)

2. 6. 1911 church with 1955 addition. View looking north.

3. 6. 1911 church with 1955 addition. View looking south.

4. 6. 1911 church main floor interior.

5. 6. Ca. 1890 church. View looking southwest.

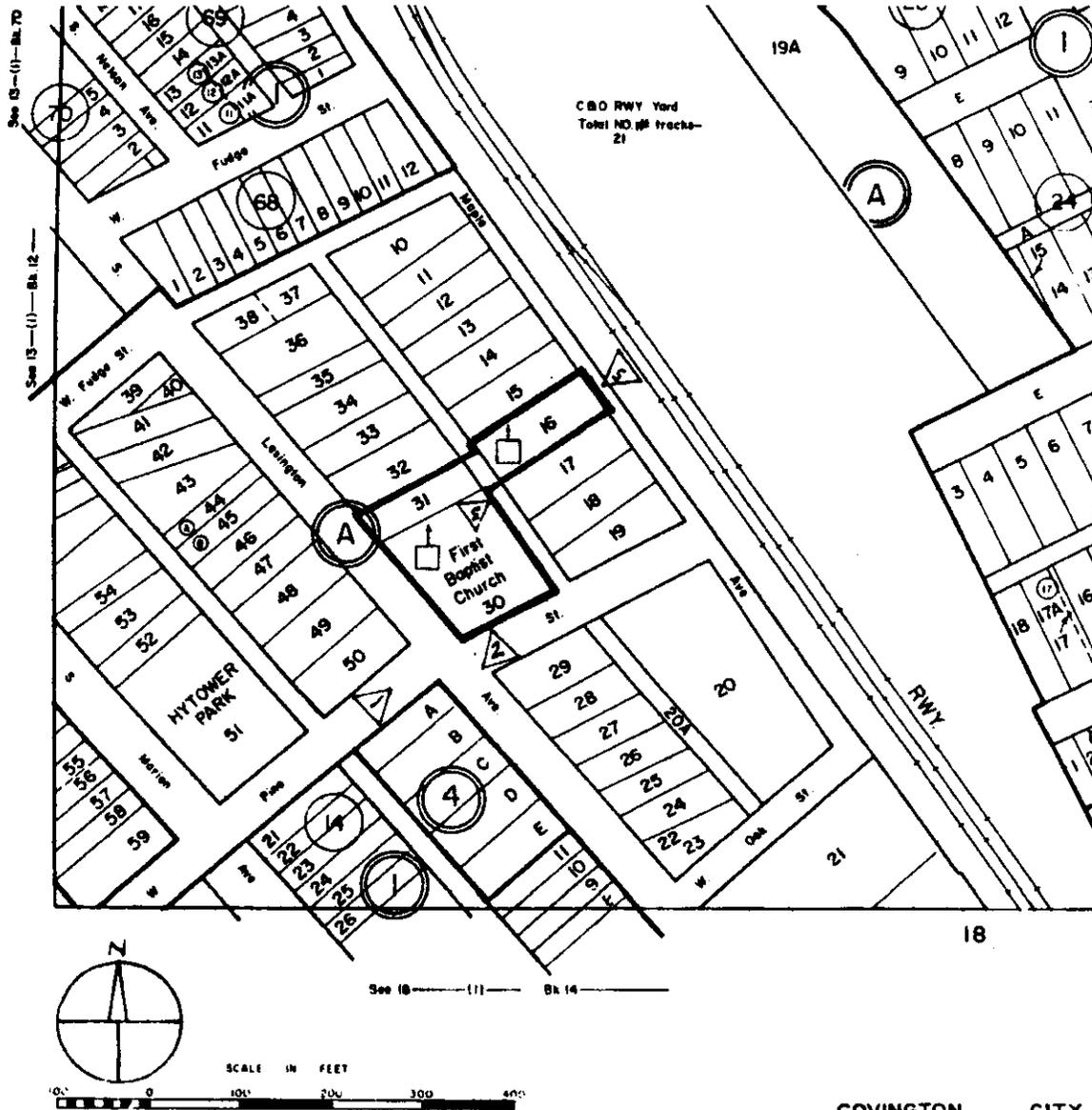
6. 6. Ca. 1890 church interior.

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First Baptist Church of Covington, Virginia
Covington, Va.

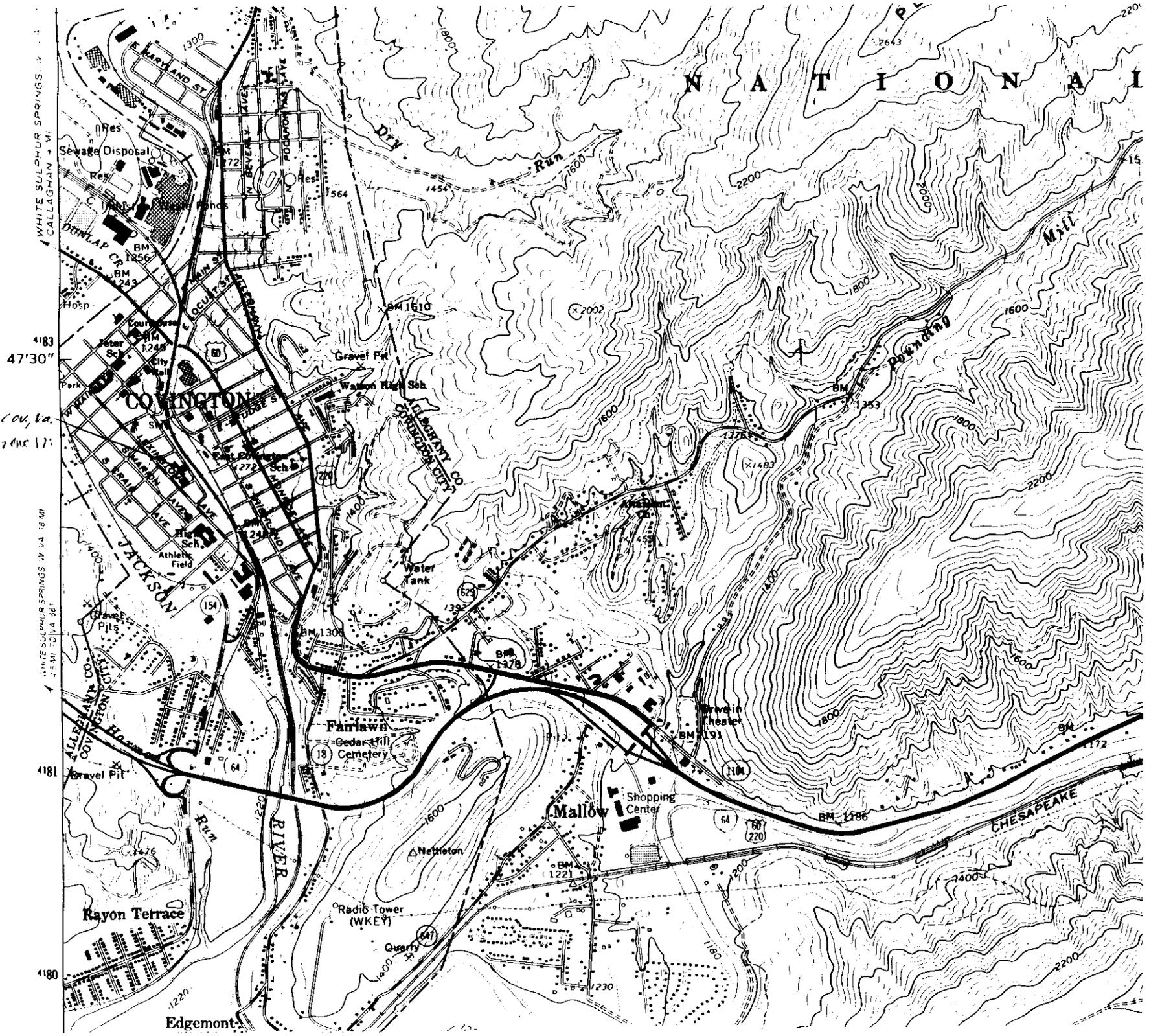
Section number Exhibit Page 14



COVINGTON CITY

Exhibit A: The First Baptist Church of Covington, Virginia nominated parcel. Map excerpted from City of Covington tax parcel map Section 14. Scale: 1 inch equals 200 feet. Number and direction of view of exterior photographs indicated by triangular markers.

First Baptist Church of Cov, Va.
Covington, VA UTM Sect. 20UC 17:
1. 858864C N4182400



4183
47'30"

WHITE SULPHUR SPRINGS VA 18 MI
1.5 MI TO VA 361

4181

4180

WHITE SULPHUR SPRINGS VA
CALLAGHAN + VI