

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 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.

LISTED:  
VLR  
12/13/2012  
NRHP  
02/27/2013

### 1. Name of Property

Historic name: First Baptist Church

Other names/site number: VDHR file no. 144-0027-0167

Name of related multiple property listing:  
N/A

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

### 2. Location

Street & number: 100 South Main Street

City or town: Farmville State: Virginia County: Prince Edward County

Not For Publication:  n/a Vicinity:  n/a

### 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   x   statewide     local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

  x   A   x   B     C     D

M. Catherine Shuman, Deputy Director, January 3, 2013  
Signature of certifying official/Title: Date  
Virginia Department of Historic Resources  
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property     meets     does not meet the National Register criteria.  
  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting official: Date  
  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Title : State or Federal agency/bureau  
or Tribal Government

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#### 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:) \_\_\_\_\_

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Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

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#### 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

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**Number of Resources within Property**

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

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

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 1

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**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

RELIGION/Religious Facility/Church

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

RELIGION/Religious Facility/Church

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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## 7. Description

### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE 19<sup>TH</sup> AND 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY REVIVALS/ Late Gothic Revival

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**Materials:** (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: BRICK; METAL

### Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

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### Summary Paragraph

Constructed ca. 1855 and ca. 1895, First Baptist Church is located in downtown Farmville at the southeast corner of South Main Street and 4<sup>th</sup> Street. The load-bearing masonry building is a modest example of Late Gothic Revival architecture. Built on a full basement, the one-story church is a nave plan with a rectangular footprint and is oriented on a roughly east/west axis, with the primary façade facing west. An altar area is within a telescoping hipped-roofed projection at the east (rear) end of the building. The front-gabled roof is covered with metal. Character-defining features include a square tower centered on the primary façade, pointed arch windows with stained- and milk-glass panes, a primary entry with double leaf doors topped by a pointed arch transom and, on the interior, original wood pews and beaded board wainscoting. Overall, the building retains a high level of integrity. First Baptist Church is a contributing resource within the Farmville Historic District, which is significant for industry, architecture, commerce, and politics/government, and was listed in the NRHP in 1989.

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### Narrative Description

#### Site Description

First Baptist Church occupies a small, irregularly shaped four-sided lot at the southeast corner of South Main and 4th Street. The church lot is slightly above the grade level of the adjacent streets and sidewalks. A low concrete retaining wall topped with a metal tube railing separates the lot

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from the sidewalks, and a poured concrete sidewalk leads from the Main Street sidewalk to the primary entry. At the northwest corner of the lot, there is a wooden sign advertising the church's name and events. Near the church's southwest corner, there is a rectangular sign composed of a brick base and a stone block carved with the church's name. An interpretive panel parallel to the sidewalk and at the southwest corner of the lot was erected by the Civil Rights in Education Heritage Trail program. Landscaping is limited to a few small evergreen shrubs near the church foundation and alongside the walkway. A concrete sidewalk and an asphalt parking lot border the south side of the lot. Directly behind the church building are a small shed and a low white picket fence enclosing mechanical equipment. A small creek runs along the east side of the lot and is contained within a channel lined with cut stone blocks.

### **Church (ca. 1855 and ca. 1895; Contributing)**

First Baptist Church is a one-story, rectangular, front-gabled building on a full basement, with a three-bay primary façade, five-bay side elevations, and a hipped-roof extension on the east (rear) elevation. The historic records and extant historic fabric suggest the building originally was constructed ca. 1855 and substantially rebuilt ca. 1895. Rising from a brick foundation, the walls are constructed of load-bearing brick laid in a pattern of five courses of stretcher bond and one course of headers. A square tower with a low hipped roof is centered on the west (primary) façade. The primary entry and an entry on the north wall have original wood doors. Two basement entries on the south wall and one on the north wall have replacement metal doors. On the main level's south wall, there is an entry with a wood, two-light door, and a simple metal fire escape leads from it to the ground. At the basement level, rectangular window openings with two-over-two wood sash are regularly spaced along the north and south walls. On the main level, symmetrically arranged windows on the west façade and all three secondary elevations feature original wood sash with stained- and milk-glass panes, painted concrete sills, and soldier brick pointed arches. An oculus window is centered on the west wall of the tower's upper portion. The church's front-gabled roof, the rear extension, and the tower roof all are covered with metal. A narrow fascia board, painted white, extends along the eaves. A wood cornice band, also painted white, extends across the west façade to either side of the central tower. Surface-mounted metal downspouts are at the easternmost corners of the north and south elevations.

On the three-bay west façade, the primary entry is located within the centered tower. It is approached via a concrete walk and a brick stoop flanked by metal tube railings. The entry features a pair of tall, wide wood doors with 6 narrow rectangular panels each. Above the doors is a pointed arch transom with numerous small glass panes. Along the edges of the arch, the glass panes have been cut to conform to the arch's shape. Centered above the entry and just below the main block's gabled peak, there is an oculus window with clear glass panes and wood tracery. The tower's north and south walls each have a narrow pointed arch window at the same height as the entry and a smaller pointed arch window at the same level as the oculus window. The windows on the main level have milk- and stained-glass panes in a configuration that matches the main block's larger windows, while the upper level windows have clear glass panes. To either side of the tower, on the main block, the pointed arch windows are composed of two stacked sections of original stained- and milk-glass panes separated by a painted wood spandrel. The larger central panes of each window have milk glass, surrounded by small squares of stained

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glass panes in a variety of colors. The fascia board and cornice band on the primary façade lend the building a very faint Greek Revival influence.

The main block's south elevation consists of five bays. At the basement level, the westernmost bay has a replacement metal door, and the adjacent two bays have original wood two-over-two sash with clear glass panes. A replacement metal door occupies the fourth bay, with a two-over-two window in the fifth (easternmost) bay. The replacement doors are fronted by small poured concrete slabs. The windows have painted concrete sills and flat arches with header bricks. On the main level, from west to east, tall, pointed-arch windows occupy the first three bays and the fifth bay, with a combination window and door in the fourth bay. Very similar to the windows on the primary (west) façade, the pointed arch windows are composed of two stacked sections of original stained- and milk-glass panes separated by a painted wood spandrel. The sash's lower section consists of a single-hung sash while the upper section is fixed.

The main block's north elevation is almost identical to the south elevation. At the basement level, the westernmost bay has a replacement metal door and the adjacent two bays have original wood two-over-two sash. The fourth bay features an entry with a pair of original wood doors and a paneled wood surround. The height of the entry is slightly lower than that of the flanking window openings. The doors feature four narrow panels in a configuration that matches the primary entry's doors. The fifth (easternmost) bay has a window with a two-over-two wood sash. On the main level, each of the five bays is occupied by a tall pointed-arch window that matches those on the south elevation.

Much of the main block's east (rear) elevation is occupied by the hipped-roofed extension. The north and south walls of the extension each have a rectangular window with a two-over-two sash at the ground level. The east wall has no window openings at the ground level, while on the main level there are three tall, narrow, pointed arch windows, with the central window somewhat taller than the two flanking windows. Each window has a wood sash with multiple small colored glass panes arranged in a pattern that matches the transom above the primary entry on the west façade. A narrow fascia board, matching that of the main block, extends just beneath the extension's eaves.

### *Interior Description*

The primary entry opens to a small vestibule with a carpeted floor, beaded board wainscoting, and plastered walls. A short flight of wood steps leads to the main floor of the church. At the top of the steps is an entry with a pair of historic, pointed arch, wood doors. The doors are hinged to swing into the vestibule, and each has an angled wood railing affixed to its lower half that acts as a handrail for those ascending the steps. The doors are set within an arched opening highlighted by darkly stained beaded woodwork that matches the wainscoting.

The main level of the church is a single open space with wood flooring, carpeted aisles, beaded wainscoting, and plaster walls. The windows have darkly stained wood sills that match the wainscoting. The ceiling is covered with square tiles. Descending from the ceiling are a series of four brass chandeliers, and electric wall sconces are placed along the perimeter walls between

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the windows. Much of the floor space is occupied by original wood pews arranged on each side of a central aisle, with narrow aisles along the perimeter walls. Each set of pews is curved, with the curve becoming more pronounced as one nears the altar area. The end piece of each pew has a carved panel with a pointed arch that matches those of the windows.

The chancel occupies a raised platform at the east end of the nave. A short flight of steps accesses the platform on the north side, and the south side of the platform is the choir area. A wood pulpit and chairs occupy the center of the platform. Behind the chairs is an open space with a movable panel set in the floor, beneath which is the baptistery. On the south side of the chancel, a storage area is located between the main block's east wall and the rear extension's wall. Within a similar space on the north side of the chancel, a narrow winder staircase leads down to the basement.

The majority of the basement level is occupied by a single open space that serves as the fellowship hall. Through the middle of the floor space, painted cast iron columns are arranged in two rows that parallel the north and south walls of the building. The walls are plastered and asbestos tiles cover the floor. Partition walls have been added to the southwest corner of the fellowship hall to create a small office space. The west end of the basement contains an unfinished room with mechanical equipment. The east end of the basement contains men's and women's restrooms, a kitchen, and a narrow hall that leads to the staircase up to the main level.

### **Integrity**

First Baptist Church maintains a high level of integrity on the interior and exterior. The simple Gothic Revival architecture has been well maintained and carefully preserved over the years. The building continues to serve its original function as a place of worship.

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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.)

- 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

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**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

- EDUCATION
- ETHNIC HERITAGE/ African American
- LAW
- POLITICS/GOVERNMENT
- RELIGION
- SOCIAL HISTORY
- 

**Period of Significance**

1951-1964  
   
 

**Significant Dates**

- April 25, 1951
- May 3, 1951
- May 17, 1954
- September 10, 1959
- September 16, 1963
- May 25, 1964
- September 8, 1964

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Griffin, L. Francis  
   
 

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A  
   
 

**Architect/Builder**

N/A

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**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph** (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

First Baptist Church, at 100 South Main Street in downtown Farmville, Virginia, is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places with a statewide level of significance under Criterion A, with the following Areas of Significance: Education, Ethnic Heritage: African American, Law, Politics/Government, Religion, and Social History. The property also is eligible at the statewide level of significance under Criterion B for its association with Reverend L. Francis Griffin, who played a major role in the struggle to integrate Prince Edward County's public schools. The property meets Criteria Consideration A, as its historical significance is derived from its direct association with pivotal events in the county school system's desegregation. The property also meets Criteria Consideration G, for events that occurred less than fifty years ago but that are of transcendent importance in the history of Prince Edward County and the Commonwealth of Virginia. The period of significance for First Baptist Church is 1951 to 1964, encompassing the activities of Reverend L. Francis Griffin, the church congregation, and local students and residents to integrate Prince Edward County's schools. First Baptist Church still stands as the place of worship for its predominantly African American congregation. First Baptist Church is a contributing resource within the Farmville Historic District, which is significant for industry, architecture, commerce, and politics/government, and was listed in the NRHP in 1989.

First Baptist Church, a predominantly black place of worship since 1867, is historically significant because of the direct association between First Baptist under the pastorate of Reverend L. Francis Griffin and the Robert Russa Moton High School strike on April 23, 1951, and the subsequent racial integration of Prince Edward County schools.<sup>1</sup> Called by Rev. Griffin, hundreds of striking students and their parents met twice at First Baptist Church within two weeks of the strike, on April 25 and May 3, and agreed to support an NAACP lawsuit to desegregate the Prince Edward County schools. Filed on May 23, 1951, at the federal court in Richmond as *Davis v. County School Board of Prince Edward County, Virginia*, the Moton School suit became one of five cases consolidated into the landmark *Brown v. Board of Education* decision of the United States Supreme Court, on May 17, 1954, that outlawed public school segregation. Following the Moton student strike and the Supreme Court decision, Prince Edward County, in an unprecedented action, closed its public schools on September 10, 1959, and kept them closed until 1964 to avoid integration. Consequently, black students in Prince Edward County received no public education from fall 1959 until fall 1963, when First Baptist pastor Rev. Francis Griffin headed efforts to establish a privately funded and administered Free School Association that opened on September 16, 1963, and provided one year of education for most black students. Only after the May 25, 1964, Supreme Court decision in *Griffin v. County School Board of Prince Edward County*, which ordered that all Prince Edward County schoolchildren receive equal public school education, did Prince Edward County open integrated public schools for all students on September 8, 1964.

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**Narrative Statement of Significance** (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

First Baptist Church began as a place of worship for white Baptists after trustees purchased land in two adjoining parcels, in 1839 and 1842, and then built Farmville Baptist Church on the purchased land. In 1856 white Baptist trustees conveyed the “Old Baptist Church” to Thomas B. Rice and others for \$1,500. The deed of transfer recorded that the trustees sold the property to defray costs for purchase of another lot and construction of a new church. The Rice family operated a private school for boys, known as Southside Institute, in the former church until the school was forced to close due to the Civil War. During the war, the building housed Ward 10 of the Confederate General Hospital in Farmville. The hospital opened in 1862 and, in its entirety, could house between 1,200 and 1,500 patients, although the average capacity ran around 800 beds. Two divisions of the hospital opened in the tobacco warehouses in the town of Farmville; and later the hospital erected a third division on the western edge of town adjacent to the Southside Railroad.<sup>2</sup> The Southside Institute became part of the hospital no later than 30 November 1863, when a receipt noted that Confederate authorities paid \$25.00 per month in rent. They also considered the former school to be the most comfortable building in the Farmville General Hospital complex. The Southside Institute remained part of the hospital complex until April 1865.<sup>3</sup> After that point it may have served as a hospital or administration building for the Freedmen’s Bureau, as did the other former buildings of the hospital.<sup>4</sup> In April and June 1867, Thomas Rice’s wife, Mary Rice, sold the building and property in two parcels to Colored Baptist Church trustees William D. Evans, Ottaway Lipscomb, James Scott, William Ward, and Caesar White for a total of \$1,100.<sup>5</sup>

The historic records indicate the church building had endured considerable wear over the preceding decades. The extant materials suggest the building was extensively renovated, and perhaps at least partially rebuilt ca. 1895. The brick that clads the exterior walls and the minimal Gothic Revival attributes, including the central tower, pointed arch window and door openings, and original milk- and stained-glass panes, are believed to have been added to the building during the same renovation campaign. A circa 1900 photograph demonstrates that the building had achieved its current appearance by this time.

L. Francis Griffin’s father, Charles H. D. Griffin, became pastor of First Baptist Church in Farmville in 1927, when Francis was 10 years old. After military service in Europe in World War II, where he gained social consciousness and an active belief in black equality, Francis Griffin finished high school, attended Shaw University in North Carolina, studied for the ministry, joined the NAACP, married, and began preaching, sometimes at his father’s church in Farmville. When his father’s health began to fail, Francis Griffin returned to Farmville and became pastor of First Baptist after his father died in 1949. There as pastor, Rev. Griffin founded a Prince Edward County chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), joined and then headed the county’s black Parent-Teacher Association (PTA), and became an outspoken advocate of racial equality and black civil rights.<sup>6</sup>

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The Moton High School Student Strike, First Baptist Church, and Rev. Francis Griffin, 1951

On Monday, April 23, 1951, Moton High School junior Barbara Johns led a student strike after Moton principal Boyd Jones received a prearranged phone call that lured him out of school. Barbara Johns and other strike committee members assembled the 450 students, ordered teachers to leave, and called for a student strike until Moton students received equal treatment and acceptable high school facilities. That afternoon the strike committee called and invited Rev. Francis Griffin of First Baptist Church to meet them at the school. Rev. Griffin received the news of the strike with active joy and gave the strike committee contact information for attorney Oliver Hill in Richmond as the NAACP special counsel for the southeastern region of the United States.<sup>7</sup>

Hill remembered that Barbara Johns, the niece of nationally known civil rights protagonist Vernon Johns, pleaded her case so strongly about the deplorable conditions at Moton School that he chose not to terminate the discussion on the telephone. Hill and law partner Spottswood Robinson agreed to meet the striking students in Farmville that Wednesday morning. Barbara Johns said they would meet at Rev. Griffin's First Baptist Church in downtown Farmville.<sup>8</sup>

First Baptist pastor Rev. Griffin immediately joined the cause of the Moton School student strike for racial equality. Griffin had already worked with John Lancaster, the black county agriculture agent, and with Willie Redd, former president of the Prince Edward County PTA, to find a suitable site for a new black high school, but he never received a response from the county school board. As soon as he met with striking students, he joined and began to lead their cause.<sup>9</sup>

On the evening of the student strike, Rev. Griffin borrowed a car and drove into the county to talk to his parishioners and any others who would listen. Now he found an audience for his preaching of social activism. Ten years later he remembered, "Everybody was up with their kids. Parents were being asked to sign petitions for support. I went into some homes as late as twelve, or one, or two o'clock in the morning and people were still up. . . . From then on I covered some miles."<sup>10</sup>

On Wednesday morning, April 25, 1951, Rev. Griffin arranged for meeting space in the First Baptist basement fellowship hall. There striking Moton students and a few parents convened with NAACP attorneys Hill and Robinson. Robinson told the students that the NAACP would only be interested in a desegregation suit, as the organization had abandoned attempts to win equal but segregated facilities. Hill remembered that he and Robinson planned to tell the students to go back to school, but "we found these students had such fine morale and were so well disciplined that we didn't have the heart to break their spirit." John Stokes, a member of the student strike committee, said Hill and Robinson told them that the support of 95 percent of the parents would be necessary, and the fight would be long and hard.<sup>11</sup>

The next week, Rev. Griffin reacted quickly to a letter mailed by Moton School principal Boyd Jones. Well respected by the striking students but under pressure from the school board, Jones wrote a letter that went to all parents of Moton students. The letter said that the school division superintendent "authorized" him to tell them all to send "your children back to school." Jones

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wrote that “grave consequences” would be suffered by those who violated compulsive attendance laws and that the strike “created the wrong impression.”<sup>12</sup>

Because Rev. Griffin knew that the letter from Principal Jones might cause some parents to send their children back to school, he responded immediately with his own mimeographed letter to the parents. Griffin’s letter announced that a meeting of the county-wide PTA would be held at First Baptist Church, Farmville, at 8 pm May 3 and that NAACP attorneys Hill and Robinson would be present to discuss the procedures necessary to secure the students’ constitutional rights. He concluded, “REMEMBER. The eyes of the world are on us. The intelligent support we give our cause will serve as a stimulant for the cause of free people everywhere.”<sup>13</sup>

At the packed meeting in First Baptist on May 3, 1951, Oliver Hill again explained that NAACP strategy had now changed from establishment of equal facilities to abolition of segregation. Barbara Johns spoke to the students, urged support for the NAACP, and challenged conservative blacks in the audience. “Don’t let anyone stop you from backing us. We are depending on you.” Rev. Griffin closed the meeting with another rallying cry: “Anybody who would not back these children after they stepped out on a limb is not a man. Anybody who won’t fight against racial prejudice is not a man.”<sup>14</sup>

Apparently some conservative members of Rev. Griffin’s congregation found themselves uncomfortable with his outspoken support for the cause of racial justice and equality. A few, raised in the tradition of accommodation with white authority, must have spoken about removing him as pastor of First Baptist as, in mid-July 1951, Rev. Griffin met this rumored opposition with a sermon that confirmed his spiritual and activist commitment to civil rights and social justice. Rev. Griffin wrote out his sermon, not his usual practice, titled it “The Prophecy of Equalization,” and used as his text Isaiah 40: 4–5, “Let every valley be lifted up. . . . Then the glory of the Lord will be revealed.” When he spoke of the student strike, he said, “I would sacrifice my job, my money, or any property for the principles of right. . . . I’m willing to die rather than let these children down. . . . I don’t have a thing and never will have at the price of human dignity. Still I will have that which no man can take from me, my individual right to think as I choose and inner freedom. Therefore, in the words of Martin Luther, I too must say, ‘Here I stand, God help me. I can do no other.’” In closing he looked over the congregation. “No one’s going to scare me from my convictions by threatening my job. All who want me to stay as head of the church raise your hands.” Almost every hand in the church went in the air. His critics roused, the deacons took a vote to support Rev. Griffin’s position as pastor of First Baptist Church and announced it the next Sunday.<sup>15</sup>

*Davis v. County School Board of Prince Edward County and Brown v. Board of Education, 1951–1954*

Shortly after the meeting at First Baptist on May 3, 1951, the NAACP filed a petition for desegregation with the Prince Edward County school board. When the school board failed to grant relief, Spottswood Robinson filed the *Davis v. County School Board of Prince Edward County* lawsuit in Richmond federal court on May 23, 1951. The suit was filed on behalf of 117

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Moton High School petitioners, who represented over a quarter of the entire Moton student body.<sup>16</sup>

A special three-judge federal district court convened in Richmond in February 1952 to hear the case. The state argued that segregation was not discriminatory, that Virginia might resort to massive violation of the law if the court ruled against segregation, that the suit was fomented by agitation and propaganda from the NAACP, and that it was up to the legislature and not the courts to determine whether or not segregation was a discriminatory practice. Rev. Griffin testified that the black Prince Edward County PTA never received any tangible commitment from the school board to build a new black high school, even though the PTA had followed a school board directive and located a potential site. Hill said that segregation had to be challenged in the courts because Virginia and other southern states would block congressional rulings on segregation and that segregated schools violated students' opportunities to gain equal civil rights under the law. The Richmond federal district court found in segregation "no harm to either race." Hill, Robinson, and the NAACP did not agree. The next year *Davis* went to the Supreme Court as part of *Brown v. Board of Education*.<sup>17</sup>

The initial hearing of *Brown* in the spring of 1953 ended with a request for reargument. Reargument began December 7, 1953, under newly appointed Chief Justice Earl Warren. Attorneys for the defense argued that segregation provided for equal education and had nothing to do with racial discrimination. NAACP attorney Thurgood Marshall responded that the only way for the Court to uphold segregation was to hold that "for some reason Negroes are inferior to other human beings. . . . Now is the time we submit that the Court should make it clear that this is not what the Constitution stands for."<sup>18</sup>

Earl Warren addressed the other justices of the Court at their Saturday morning conference on December 12, 1953, three days after the Court adjourned the *Brown* reargument. Though he made no reference to Thurgood Marshall's closing argument, Warren told the other justices that the doctrine of separate but equal rested on the concept of the inferiority of the Negro race. Warren drafted a short readable opinion and circulated it among the justices with subsequent revisions until it received final unanimous approval at a conference of the justices five months later on May 15, 1954. On May 17, 1954, Chief Justice Warren read the opinion, which closed, "We conclude unanimously that in the field of public education the doctrine of 'separate but equal' has no place. Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal." Though it took more than a decade after the Moton student strike and *Davis*, the courts and the pulpit finally determined that an integrated public school would open in Prince Edward County. Rev. Griffin did not let his children down.<sup>19</sup>

#### Rev. Griffin and the Closing of Prince Edward County Schools, 1959–1964

Reporter Carl Rowan wrote that, by the end of 1955, Rev. Griffin seemed beleaguered by both blacks and whites in Prince Edward County because of his opposition to racially segregated schools. Farmville businessmen denied him credit for purchase of the food and fuel needed for his family. Some of his congregation at First Baptist again blamed him for "everything that was

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wrong with the church on the school situation.” Reporter and historian Bob Smith wrote that Griffin had become a dangerous friend to blacks as well as an enemy to whites.<sup>20</sup>

Griffin’s finances gradually improved, however, as did his stature as a community leader. When the county board of supervisors closed Prince Edward County public schools from 1959 to 1964, he received new recognition as a leading civil rights spokesperson for open and integrated public schools. In the early 1960s, Griffin became statewide president of the Virginia NAACP. Griffin gained new energy from the student activism of the early 1960s, as he had from the Moton student strike the decade before. Most important, he gained national influence when the new era of sit-ins, freedom rides, and demonstrations came to Farmville and Prince Edward County, and he protested the closing of the county’s schools. Bob Smith recognized that the sit-in movement marked a watershed in Prince Edward County. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.’s Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) envisioned a possible role in Prince Edward County, and King visited Prince Edward County in March 1962. The SCLC strategy was extralegal and might break the stalemate of courtroom litigation. At the same time, this outside attention brought recognition to Rev. Griffin as the symbol of Prince Edward County resistance. Griffin addressed the seventh annual SCLC conference in Richmond in September 1963.<sup>21</sup>

James Samuel Williams, Jr., a striking student at Moton School in 1951, followed in Rev. Griffin’s footsteps and became a student of ministry at Shaw University, North Carolina. Williams participated in the 1960 North Carolina sit-ins at the Woolworth lunch counter in Raleigh. As the sit-ins continued, Williams met Martin Luther King, Jr., when he visited Shaw University, and also members of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) who came to North Carolina. On weekends, Williams drove to Prince Edward County and preached for Rev. Griffin. By 1962, Williams had become head of the Voters Registration League of Prince Edward County, where he registered all black adults in the Green Bay community. When Williams talked to Rev. Griffin about leading some civil rights demonstrations in the spring of 1963, Griffin approved and reactivated the NAACP Youth Council with Williams in charge. Sit-ins with students from Hampton Institute and Virginia Union began in Farmville in April 1963, followed by picketing in July. Students marched on Main Street in Farmville with placards protesting the closed schools: “I have lost four years of education, WHY FIVE? (Let’s tell Russia about this)” and “Segregation is the real threat to American Democracy.” Thirty-three students were arrested in the demonstrations.<sup>22</sup>

The sit-ins and protest demonstrations brought national attention to the closed schools in Prince Edward County. In December 1962, the U.S. Department of Justice filed a friend of the court brief on behalf of the NAACP in their appeal of the closing of the Prince Edward County public schools. In February 1963, President Kennedy mentioned the Prince Edward County school closings in a civil rights address to Congress. In March 1963, Attorney General Robert Kennedy said during a speech: “The only places on earth not to provide free public education are Communist China, North Vietnam, Sarawak, Singapore, British Honduras . . . and Prince Edward County, Virginia. Something must be done about Prince Edward County.”<sup>23</sup>

With this national exposure, Rev. Griffin decided that the time was right to circulate a petition around the county, and obtained signatures from 650 black heads of households. The petition

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called for President Kennedy to sponsor a survey of the educational problems in Prince Edward County and to support a program to reopen schools for black students.<sup>24</sup>

Early in 1963, the U.S. Office of Education secured a grant to finance a study of the effect of the closed schools. With the preliminary report in hand, the Kennedy administration appointed young attorney W. J. Vanden Heuvel as special assistant to Attorney General Robert Kennedy with instructions to work out a solution to the Prince Edward County school problem. Heuvel obtained the assistance of Virginia governor Albertis Harrison, who asked former Virginia governor Colgate Darden to head the board of trustees for a private Free School Association for Prince Edward County. On August 13, 1963, Darden met in Richmond with Heuvel and Rev. Griffin. Darden asked for Griffin's assurance that black students would attend the free schools and that there would be no more demonstrations; Darden knew that then-Governor Albertis S. Harrison, Jr., thought the Farmville demonstrations were getting out of hand. Rev. Griffin agreed that black children would attend the schools, but he refused to compromise and order a halt to the demonstrations in Farmville. He said he had no assurance "that the whites would do the right thing by the Negro people, as evidenced by the closed schools." Darden tried to resign as head of the Free School Association, but Heuvel and Governor Harrison persuaded him to fulfill his assignment. Heuvel said he thought the NAACP leaders had right on their side, but he did not think there would be more demonstrations once school began.<sup>25</sup>

Rev. Griffin did not relinquish support for the demonstrations that had brought the closed schools to national attention. Darden secured a competent school administrator and educational specialists and began raising the private funds needed to operate the Free School Association programs for one year. On September 16, 1963, about 1,700 black Prince Edward County students returned to privately organized and funded schools. That student body did not include many of the older teenage students who had jobs or were unwilling to make the adjustment back to school attendance with children half their age.<sup>26</sup>

While Rev. Griffin embraced the new civil rights protests that called attention to the closed Prince Edward County schools, he never turned away from the legal defense of black civil rights provided by the NAACP. After Virginia state courts blocked NAACP suits to reopen Prince Edward County schools in 1959 and 1961, Rev. Griffin traveled to New Jersey, where his children then resided with their grandmother, and brought his oldest son, Leslie Francis, Jr., back to live with him in Farmville. There, in fall 1961, Leslie Griffin, Jr. became the named plaintiff in *Griffin v. Prince Edward County*. The case, argued before the Virginia Supreme Court of Appeals in March 1962, finally ended on May 25, 1964, when the U. S. Supreme Court decision authored by Justice Hugo Black ordered Prince Edward County to reopen its public schools without restriction to race. Prince Edward County's desegregated public schools reopened on September 8, 1964.<sup>27</sup>

Interviewed in November 2011 and January 2012, members of First Baptist Church in Farmville remembered Rev. Francis Griffin as the pastor who gave them an activist understanding of Jesus. Samuel Williams, Jr., said Rev. Griffin directed his earliest spiritual development at Sunday school classes downstairs in the church fellowship hall below the sanctuary. John A. Baker, Jr., a First Baptist Deacon for 30 years, said Rev. Griffin was like a lightning bug. He always wanted

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to be a preacher because of what was in him. He didn't care about the institution of the church, but he cared about the life of the church, he cared about education, and preached for the causes he supported. E. Deloris Hendricks, baptized by Rev. Griffin at age 14 and now Evangelist with First Baptist Church Women's Ministry, remembered that he preached about politics, and told the congregation how to vote. He supported the children and preached for the cause of better education. She remembered the student strike and the school closings as very difficult times, and said Rev. Griffin's health suffered from the strife of the struggle. Magnolia B. Hayes, formerly a beautician and businesswoman, once loaned 25 cents to Rev. Griffin. Perhaps in reference to Rev. Griffin's disinterest in money, John Baker, Jr., remembered one of the sayings their pastor quoted from Shakespeare, "He who steals my purse steals trash, but he who steals my good name... makes me poor indeed." Former First Baptist Trustee Betty Berryman added that Rev. Griffin often gave his money away to people whenever he had cash in his pocket. All those interviewed remembered Rev. Griffin as a man of action, a man who made church interesting, preached what he believed, and made people want to stay the cause of all possible education for the children of his church and all children.<sup>28</sup>

From the Moton School strike in 1951 to the *Griffin* decision that reopened public schools in Prince Edward County in 1964, Rev. Francis Griffin held his life to the principles of human dignity, social justice, and racial equality. He affirmed these convictions from the pulpit of First Baptist Church. He looked to the courts and supported NAACP civil rights litigation to end segregation and racial discrimination. He welcomed the extralegal civil demonstrations in the streets that called attention to the injustices of segregation. The great civil rights attorney Oliver Hill remembered at the end of his long life, "Reverend Griffin was an outstanding leader in the turbulent years leading to, during, and after the closure of the Prince Edward County schools. In the *Davis* case Griffin participated as an activist, and assumed a similar role in a suit involving his own children." As he promised his First Baptist congregation, Griffin lived life with the inner freedom to welcome those who challenged injustice.<sup>29</sup>

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## 9. Major Bibliographical References

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

Baker, Dorothy M., John A. Baker, Jr., Betty Berryman, Magnolia B. Hayes, E. Deloris Hendricks, and Angela D. Ward. Interview with John Kern at First Baptist Church, Farmville, Virginia: November 26, 2011.

Branch, Taylor. *Parting the Waters: America in the King Years, 1954–63*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1988.

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Heinemann, Ronald L. “Moton School Strike and Prince Edward County School Closings.” *Encyclopedia Virginia*, Charlottesville: Virginia Foundation for the Humanities, 2011.

Hill, Oliver. *The Big Bang: The Autobiography of Oliver W. Hill, Sr.* Winter Park, Florida: FOUR-G Publishers, 2000.

Jackson, Jarl K., and Julie Vosmik. “Robert Russa Moton High School” National Historic Landmark Nomination. Washington, DC: National Park Service, 1998.

Kern, John. “*Davis v. Prince Edward County, Virginia, 1951*: Land Book Research on Co-Signers for Moton School Student Petitioners.” Paper presented at Virginia Forum, March 25, 2011.

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Supreme Court of the United States. *Griffin v. County School Board of Prince Edward County*, 377, U. S. 218 (1964).

White, James L. "Confederate General Hospital," in *Today and Yesterday in the Heart of Virginia: A Reprint of the Edition of the Farmville Herald, March 29, 1935*. Farmville: Farmville Herald, 1935.

Williams, James Samuel, interview. Farmville, Virginia, January, 10, 2012.

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**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: Virginia Dept. of Historic Resources

**Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):** VDHR no. 144-0027-0167

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**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreeage of Property** approximately .262 acre

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

**Latitude/Longitude Coordinates**

Datum if other than WGS84: \_\_\_\_\_

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1. Latitude: 37.3007733757648                      Longitude: -78.3930120953799

2. Latitude:    Longitude:

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3. Latitude: Longitude:

4. Latitude: Longitude:

**Or**

**UTM References**

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

NAD 1927 or  NAD 1983

1. Zone: Easting: Northing:

2. Zone: Easting: Northing:

3. Zone: Easting: Northing:

4. Zone: Easting : Northing:

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

First Baptist Church occupies a lot at the southeast corner of S. Main Street and 4<sup>th</sup> Street in downtown Farmville that is recorded as parcel no.23A4 (13) 3-4 by Prince Edward County, Virginia. The historic boundary coincides with the lot lines (see attached parcel map).

**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The historic boundary encompasses First Baptist Church and its immediate environs, and follows the lot lines associated with the building since its construction.

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**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title: John Kern/ Lena Sweeten McDonald  
organization: Independent Historian/ Virginia Department of Historic Resources  
street & number: 3308 Pasley Ave., S.W./ 2801 Kensington Avenue  
city or town: Roanoke/Richmond state: VA zip code: 20015/ 23221  
e-mail lena.mcdonald@dhr.virginia.gov  
telephone: 540-985-3141/ 804-482-6439  
date: October 2012

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### **Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

### **Photographs**

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

### **Photo Log**

The following information is common to all photographs:

Name of Property: First Baptist Church

Town: Farmville

County: Prince Edward

State: Virginia

Photographer: Lena Sweeten McDonald

Date Photographed: October 2012

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

1 of 10. Church, West Façade and South Elevation, Facing Northeast.

2 of 10. Church, South and East Elevations, Facing Northwest.

3 of 10. Church, East and North Elevations, Facing Southwest.

4 of 10. Church, North Elevation and West Façade, Facing Southeast.

5 of 10. Church, West Façade Entry, Facing West.

6 of 10. Church, Nave, Facing East.

7 of 10. Church, Nave, Facing West.

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8 of 10. Church, Stained Glass Window, Facing North.

9 of 10. Church, Fellowship Hall, Facing Southeast.

10 of 10. Ca. 1900 photograph of First Baptist Church.

**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 100 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.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Robert Russa Moton High School was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1998. A detailed narrative of the student strike and subsequent struggle to integrate Prince Edward County schools is included in the NHL nomination. See Jarl K. Jackson and Julie Vosmik, "Robert Russa Moton High School" National Historic Landmark Nomination (National Park Service, Washington, D.C. 1998).

<sup>2</sup> James L. White, "Confederate General Hospital," in *Today and Yesterday in the Heart of Virginia: A Reprint of the Edition of the Farmville Herald, March 29, 1935* (Farmville: Farmville Herald, 1935), 195-98.

<sup>3</sup> Record Books of the Confederate General Hospital at Orange and Farmville, Volumes 43, 513, and 546, National Archives, Record Group 109: War Department Collection of Confederate Records, Chapter VI, Medical Department.

<sup>4</sup> White, 195-98.

<sup>5</sup> Deed Book 28, 107 (Farmville, Virginia: Prince Edward County Circuit Court); Deed Book 29, 66; *Centennial Celebration of the First Baptist Church 1866-1966, Seventeenth Anniversary of the Minister L. Francis Griffin* (Farmville, Virginia: n.p., 1966).

<sup>6</sup> Bob Smith, *They Closed Their Schools, Prince Edward County, Virginia, 1951-1964* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1965), Chapter 1.

<sup>7</sup> Oliver Hill, *The Big Bang: The Autobiography of Oliver W. Hill, Sr.* (Winter Park, Florida: FOUR-G Publishers, 2000), 148-150; Richard Kluger, *Simple Justice: The History of Brown v. Board of Education* (New York: Vintage Books, 1975), 461-470; John Kern, "Oliver White Hill: Civil Rights Attorney in Roanoke and Throughout Virginia," *Historical Society of Western Virginia Journal* 19 (No. 2), 2010.

<sup>8</sup> Hill, 150.

<sup>9</sup> Smith, 19-21, 40; Kluger, 463-464.

<sup>10</sup> Smith, 51.

<sup>11</sup> Smith, 47-48; Hill, 150.

<sup>12</sup> Smith, 56.

<sup>13</sup> Smith, 58.

<sup>14</sup> Smith, 58; Kluger, 477-478.

<sup>15</sup> Smith, 72-74; Kluger, 478-479.

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<sup>16</sup> John Kern, “*Davis v. Prince Edward County, Virginia, 1951: Land Book Research on Co-Signers for Moton School Student Petitioners*” (Paper presented at Virginia Forum, March 25, 2011).

<sup>17</sup> Kluger, 485–497.

<sup>18</sup> Kluger, 613–616, 667–674.

<sup>19</sup> Kluger, 700–708; John Kern, “Oliver White Hill,” 36–49.

<sup>20</sup> Smith, 133–136, 139.

<sup>21</sup> Smith, 200–201, 231; Taylor Branch, *Parting the Waters: America in the King Years, 1954–63* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1988), 898.

<sup>22</sup> Smith, 231–232; Ronald L. Heinemann, “Moton School Strike and Prince Edward County School Closings,” *Encyclopedia Virginia* (Charlottesville: Virginia Foundation for the Humanities, 2011); Interview with James Samuel Williams, Jr., Farmville, Virginia, January, 10, 2012.

<sup>23</sup> Heinemann.

<sup>24</sup> Smith, 237.

<sup>25</sup> Smith, 237 – 240.

<sup>26</sup> Smith, 240–241; Heinemann.

<sup>27</sup> Jackson and Vosmik; *Griffin v. County School Board of Prince Edward County*, Supreme Court of United States, 377, U. S. 218 (1964); Leslie “Skip” Griffin, personal communication to John Kern, November 11, 2011. Roanoke City Law Librarian Joey Klein provided extensive research for this legal narrative.

<sup>28</sup> Dorothy M. Baker, John A. Baker, Jr., Betty Berryman, Magnolia B. Hayes, E. Deloris Hendricks, and Angela D. Ward. Interview with John Kern at First Baptist Church, Farmville, Virginia: November 26, 2011.

<sup>29</sup> Hill, 150; Williams, January 10, 2012.

Additional Documentation: Tax Parcel Map

Instrument# 20050981 Page 3

First Baptist Church Prince Edward County, VA

Plot # 20050981

Blk. A. 316 # 4

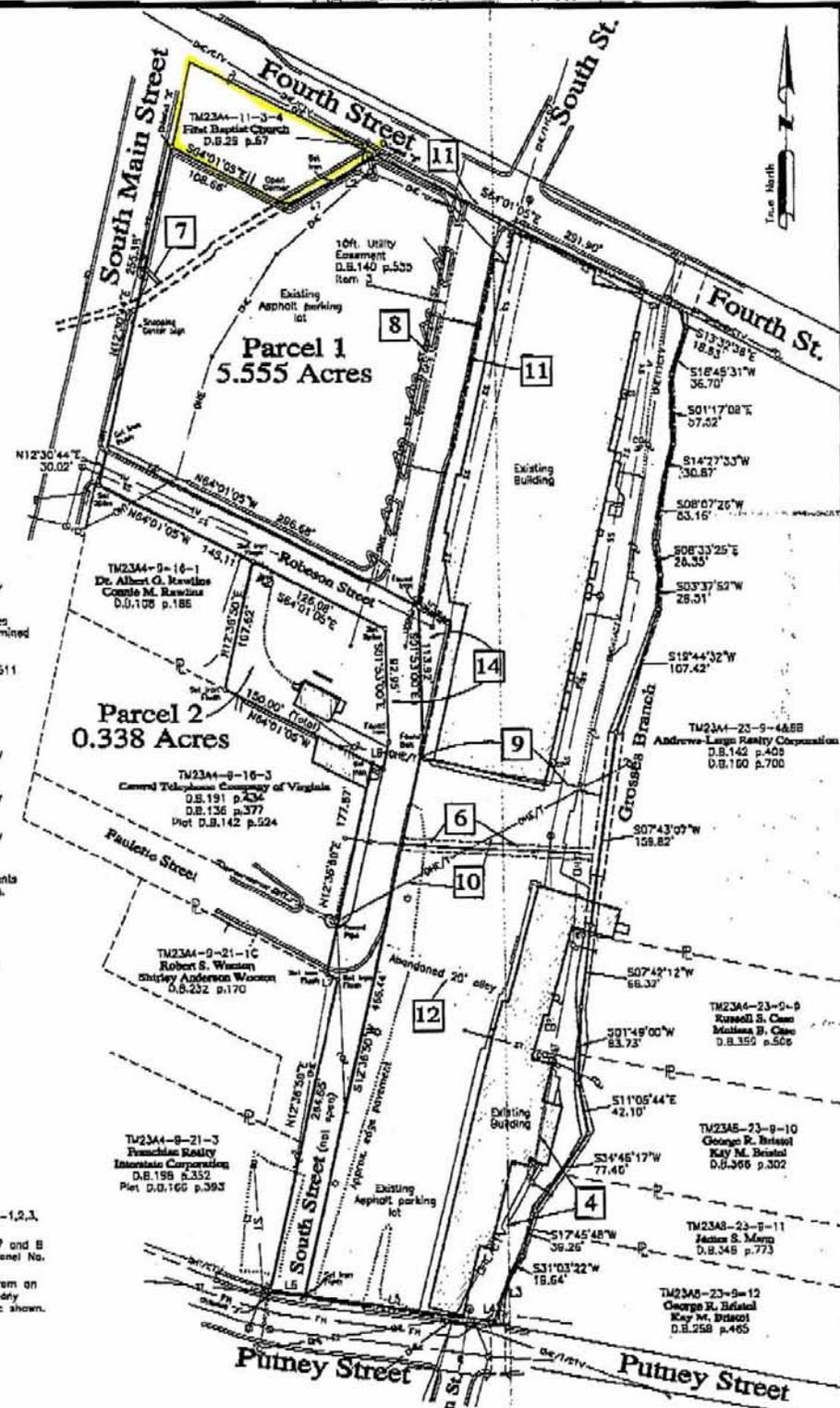
LINE	BEARING	DISTANCE
L1	N64°19'00"E	43.50'
L2	N58°30'00"E	43.50'
L3	S21°17'22"W	24.58'
L4	S04°47'12"W	14.51'
L5	N82°50'05"W	165.95'
L6	N02°50'00"W	30.14'
L7	N64°01'05"W	10.28'
L8	S84°01'36"E	15.26'
L9	N12°38'50"E	23.18'



- A. Title References**  
 Owner: Parcel 1 and 2  
 Andrews-Lorac Realty Corporation  
 D.B.141 p.537 D.B.152 p.09  
 D.B.148 p.91 D.B.158 p.715
- B. Easements/Objections** as per Southern Abstracts Corporation Title report File No. ST04815345 dated Nov. 15, 2004.
- 4** Easement to Virginia Electric and Power Company D.B.178 p.333 affects premises.
  - 5** Easement to AT&T D.B.141 p.198 affects premises and is a general easement with location undetermined by surveyor.
  - 6** Storm drainage sewer line agreement D.B.141 p.511 affects premises.
  - 7** Storm line drain construction and maintenance easement with rights of ingress and egress D.B.161 p.721 affects premises.
  - 8** Easement to Virginia Electric and Power Company D.B.124 p.445 affects premises.
  - 9** Easement to Virginia Electric and Power Company D.B.134 p.249 affects premises.
  - 10** Easement to Virginia Electric and Power Company D.B.154 p.252 affects premises.
  - 11** Ordinance by Town of Farmville existing easements and restrictions in D.B.141 p.317 affect premises.
  - 12** Censure of 20ft. Alley and deed of exchange in D.B.158 p.715 affects premises.
  - 14** Deed of Exchange with easement reservations in D.B.132 p.69 affects premises.

**Legend:**  
 OHE = Overhead electric line(s)  
 OHT = Overhead telephone line(s)  
 SS = Sanitary Sewer  
 SM = Sewer Manhole  
 OD = Sewer Manhole  
 OTV = Overhead cable television line(s)  
 FM = Sewer force main  
 WM = Water main  
 TW = 1/2 in. water line  
 CD = Sewer clean out  
 ST = Storm sewer

- Notes:**
1. Tax Map Parcel Numbers: 23A4-9-18-2, 23A4-11-3-1,2,3, 23A4-23-9-1,2,3,3A and 23A4-23-9-3B.
  2. This land is situated in F.A.R.M. Flood Plain Zones A17 and B as shown on Town of Farmville Virginia Community Panel No. S10116 0008 B. Effective date September 1, 1978.
  3. Underground utilities are shown as best determined from an aboveground visual inspection and as per utility company markings. All underground utilities may or may not be shown.
  4. Corners not labeled are open corners.
  5. This plot is based on a current field survey.



**Boundary Survey**  
 for  
**Bluestone Land, L.L.C.**  
 Town of Farmville, Prince Edward County, Virginia  
 March 20, 2005

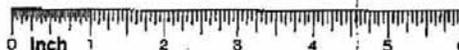


Scale: 1 in. = 50 ft.  
 0' 80' 120' 180'

**Maxe-Hines & Associates, P.C.**  
 Land Surveyors • Engineers • Planners • Consultants  
 P.O. Box 90 • Farmville • Virginia • 23901 • Tel: 434-302-8827

Virginia: In the Clerk's Office of the Circuit Court of Prince Edward County April 14, 2005. The foregoing plat was filed for record in said office along with a Deed by and between Andrews-Lorac Realty Corporation, Grantee, and M&H Town Square, LLC, Grantor, which has been recorded in Instrument # 20050981. This plat was received and admitted to record in S104 A. 316 # 4.

Robert S. Wesson, Land Surveyor



DHR # 144-0027-0167