

123-42

VLR - 12/12/89 NRHP - 1/14/91

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 of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

### 1. Name of Property

historic name SECOND PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH  
other names/site number DHR- 123-42

### 2. Location

street & number 419 WEST WASHINGTON STREET N/A  not for publication  
city, town PETERSBURG N/A  vicinity  
state VIRGINIA code VA County PETERSBURG code 730 zip code 23803  
City

### 3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> objects
		<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A  
Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: N/A

### 4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this  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  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.  See continuation sheet.

High C. Miller Signature of certifying official 21 Nov 1990 Date  
Director, VA 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.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting or other official Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

### 5. 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): \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

**6. Function or Use**

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

RELIGIOUS STRUCTURE: Church

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

RELIGIOUS STRUCTURE: Church

**7. Description**

Architectural Classification  
(enter categories from instructions)

Early Gothic Revival

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Granite

walls Brick covered with stucco

Sandstone

roof Composite Shingles

other \_\_\_\_\_

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

**SUMMARY DESCRIPTION**

Except for the loss of its steeple less than a year after it was built, Second Presbyterian Church in Petersburg retains much of its original appearance. Built in 1861-1862, and typical of the Gothic Revival, the church's tower protrudes from the central bay of its three-bay entry facade. Stucco covers the brick walls and the openings are ornamented with sandstone. Corbelled molding, buttresses, crenellation, and stained glass add to the Gothic composition. The interior is more unusual, and includes some features uncommon in Gothic Revival churches. For instance the plan is square instead of longitudinal, and the ceiling is flat rather than vaulted. A pendant and two medallions hang from the ceiling, but most of the ornament is focused on the rostrum. The apse is framed by an ogival arch, and two trefoil windows form a background for the spectacular pulpit. Much of the interior ornament is iron, cast by a foundry in Petersburg at the beginning of the Civil War. The retention of so much of its original appearance, an appearance formed and constructed during a time of great stress for the community, make Second Presbyterian Church an important resource for Petersburg.

**ARCHITECTURAL ANALYSIS**

The exterior of Second Presbyterian Church at the corner of West Washington and Lafayette streets in Petersburg has changed little in appearance since it was erected in 1861-1862. The sanctuary is of brick construction, covered with stucco, and has sandstone details. The gable roof is currently covered with composition shingle. The steeple, which sits on a crenellated tower, has been modified several times due to storm damage. The first steeple toppled due to a storm less than a year after construction on 22 February 1862. It was not replaced until 1902, but it lasted longer the second time--until 1954 when it was blown down by Hurricane Hazel. The present steeple, which is

**8. Statement of Significance**

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally  statewide  locally

Applicable National Register Criteria  A  B  C  D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions)  A  B  C  D  E  F  G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

MILITARY

Period of Significance

1861-1900

Significant Dates

1865

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

Architect/Builder

Pryor, Theodorick

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

**STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

Architecturally, Second Street Presbyterian Church is the most significant Gothic church in Petersburg. In reference to its unusual French Gothic ornament the authors of Virginia's Antebellum Churches call Second Presbyterian the most rococo of the Gothic churches in the state. Few churches across the state can boast of pendant ceiling medallions, ogival arches framing the rostrum, or compound piers cast of iron during the Civil War. This spectacular combination of intact ornament is important not just for its architectural value, but because the construction of the church was accomplished during the Civil War. The early history of Second Presbyterian Church is also colorful and noteworthy due to the leadership of several illustrious pastors and their involvements with the Civil War. Theodorick Pryor and John Miller made enduring marks upon the life of this congregation and the city of Petersburg as they attempted to advance the cause of the Confederacy and to minister to the spiritual needs of the people.

**HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

A daughter of Tabb Street Presbyterian Church, Second Church was organized on November 14, 1851, with twenty-two charter members. For the first ten years the congregation worshiped in a structure that had belonged to the High Street congregation, a product of the cleavage between the Old School and New School of American Presbyterianism. The Rev. William Venable Wilson was called as the first pastor, serving until 1854. Thirty new members were added during his pastorate. During the interim period following the resignation of Dr. Wilson, the pulpit was supplied by the Rev. Joseph R. Wilson, who had been associated with Hampden-Sydney College. Although he was not related to the man he

See continuation sheet

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

Claiborne, John Herbert, Seventy-Five Years In Old Virginia, Neale Publishing Co., N. Y., 1904.  
Davis, Vernon and Rawlings, James, Virginia's Ante-bellum Churches, Dietz Press, Richmond, 1978.  
McIlwaine, William B., Jr., History of the Second Presbyterian Church, Owen Printing Co., Petersburg, 1951.  
Pearce, T. H., Editor, Diary of Captain Henry A. Chambers, Broadfoot's Bookmark, Wendell, N. C., 1983.  
Pryor, Mrs. Roger A., Reminiscences of Peace and War, McMillian Co., N. Y., 1904  
Scott, James G. and Wyatt, Edward D., IV, Petersburg's Story, A History, Whittet & Shepperson, Richmond, 1960.  
Sessional Records of Second Presbyterian Church, Petersburg, Virginia. N. P., 1851- 1871.

See continuation sheet

**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:**

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

**Specify repository:**

VA, Department of Historic Resources  
221 GOVERNOR ST., RICHMOND, VA 23220

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreege of property Less than one

**UTM References**

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 Zone Easting Northing

C \_\_\_\_\_

B \_\_\_\_\_  
 Zone Easting Northing

D \_\_\_\_\_

See continuation sheet

**Verbal Boundary Description**

Beginning at the point where Lafayette Street intersects with West Washington Street; thence extending 199 feet east along Washington Street to the Folly Castle Property; thence extending 250 feet north to the alley behind the lot, thence extending 280 feet west along the alley to Lafayette Street; thence extending 175 feet south to the point of origin.

See continuation sheet

**Boundary Justification**

The boundary includes the entire city lot that has been historically associated with the property.

See continuation sheet

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title THE REVEREND THOMAS KENDALL SPENCE, JR., PASTOR

organization SECOND PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH date September 14, 1989

street & number 419 WEST WASHINGTON STREET telephone (804) 732-6531

city or town PETERSBURG state VIRGINIA zip code 23803

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shorter and lacking some of the ornament of the original, was added in 1984. Education wings were added at various times, first during the pastorate of James Alexander McClure (1912-1924), and again during the pastorate of William Baird McIlwaine, Jr. (1942-1956), and most recently in 1975 during the pastorate of Robert C. Vaughan, Jr. (1957-1984). These addition are also covered with stucco and are harmonious with the design of the sanctuary.

Three sets of doors provide access to the narthex from the front facade. Above each door is a larger window, framed by similar pointed arches. The sandstone frames simulate quoins up to the springline of the arches, and then continue with a simple, heavy molding. Along the eight-bay side elevations stained glass lancet windows alternate with buttresses. Corbelled molding runs between the buttresses.

Curved stairs at both ends of the narthex lead to the galleries, which extend the full length of the east and west walls of the nave as well as across the back of the sanctuary. Access to the nave is through three doorways with hood-molds. Access from the opposite end of the nave is through two doorways with lancet arches and hood-molds on either side of the rostrum.

Inside the square sanctuary space, a central aisle is flanked by two auxiliary aisles. The balcony runs across the rear wall and along both side walls, and is lit by the tall lancet windows that extend from the chair rail to just below the ceiling. A row of iron quatrefoils set within 12-inch-square panels, cast by the Tappey and Lumsden Foundry of Petersburg, ornament the balconies which are supported on slender iron columns. The two remaining original compound piers have foliated bulges for capitals, and were also cast by this foundry, a major supplier of equipment for the Confederate Army. The rosettes were originally grained to resemble mahogany.

The interior of the sanctuary is dominated by the ornament around the rostrum and by a pendant and two medallions suspended from the ceiling. The pendant was inspired by late Gothic pendant vaulting. The ceiling's large recessed panel is framed by ornate, foliated modillions and a similarly ornamented molding runs through the entablature. Referring to these details and the elaborate ogival arches at the rostrum, all reminiscent

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of French Gothic architecture, Vernon Perdue Davis and James Scott Rawlings characterized the church as the most rococo in Virginia in their book Virginia's Ante-bellum Churches. The original gaslights were replaced with electrical fixtures around the turn of the century. Two large chandeliers, each containing five lights enclosed in round globes, are suspended from the ceiling medallions. Sconces made of wood provide indirect lighting along the east and west walls of the nave. These sconces were designed during a recent renovation and are compatible with the other details in the church.

The rostrum, with a central massive pulpit and a soaring apse, is particularly noteworthy. Perdue Davis and Rawlings claim that the double trefoil window in the back of the apse, along with its ornate Gothic molding, form what is "probably the finest surviving background for a surviving rostrum" in the state. The ogival molding above the window mimics that of the apse itself. The pulpit is a three-part composition from which the central portion protrudes and is braced by colonettes, and the whole is articulated by inset trefoil panels.

The stained glass window in the apse dates from 1861-1862. The stained glass windows on the east and west walls, ten in number, were installed around the turn of the century. The pointed Gothic arches are capped with elaborate hood-molds. The apse window contains vivid and deep hues of green, red, blue, and amber. The prevailing colors of the windows along the walls of the nave are a pale shade of mauve with accents of amber.

Pews on the main floor, which were installed near the end of the Second World War, are arranged in four groups. The replacement pews have a natural walnut finish. The original pews, made of pine boards measuring fourteen inches in width, are still in use in the galleries. These pews are painted a mahogany color. The original floor is also exposed in the galleries. Flooring on the main level is covered with a veneer of hardwoods.

For a greater part of its history all the wood surfaces in the sanctuary were stained in a natural finish, and the plaster walls were painted in ivory or cream. In more recent years other colors were gradually introduced, including the current soft shades of mauve, which complement the stained glass windows. The

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paneled rostrum, galleries, wainscoting, and moldings are painted a contrasting white.

The Austin pipe organ, installed in 1965, was placed in the gallery above the narthex. The pipes are set within an open case that repeats the decorative motifs of the rostrum, galleries, and ceiling moldings.

The baptismal font, given in memory of William H. Tappey and Lucy Butler Seal Tappey, is of ancient origin. Made entirely of stone, the base contains a rough brick from the walls of the city of York, in North Britain, originally laid by the hands of Roman soldiers before the birth of Christ. In the base is also set a piece of marble from the ruins of Saint Mary's Abbey in York, one of the most famous British monasteries in the medieval period. In the bowl is set a block, a fragment of a pillar of granite, which comes from the ruins of Iona, off the coast of Scotland, where Saint Columba and twelve devoted followers established a base for the evangelization of Scotland.

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succeeded, Joseph R. Wilson was the father of President Woodrow Wilson.

The Rev. Theodorick Pryor, from the Third Presbyterian Church of Baltimore, was called as pastor in 1854. Dr. Pryor shepherded this struggling church through the early years of the Civil War. One of his most outstanding accomplishments was the building of this architecturally sophisticated sanctuary that served a growing congregation into the closing decades of the twentieth century.

The church was constructed at the corner of Washington and Lafayette streets. Dr. Pryor is credited with being the architect for the Gothic Revival structure. He was especially indebted to Robert McIlwaine and William H. Tappey, two of the leading citizens of the city, for the successful completion of the work. To build a \$30,000 church for a membership of 150 in the opening months of the Civil War was no easy task, and indicates the undaunted spirit of this congregation. Work was begun in 1861 and completed the following year.

Roger A. Pryor, the son of Theodorick Pryor, became a leading advocate of secession, even though the prevailing mood of the citizens of Petersburg was opposed to this radical step. The minister's son joined the Confederate Army as a colonel and was promoted to brigadier general. The tranquil life of the city was not disturbed during the first three years of the war, but as the casualties began to mount, the conflict became a painful reality. In the closing months of Dr. Pryor's ministry, the Confederate soldiers made large demands upon his time and sympathy. He was often at the bedside of the sick and wounded and dying. It was a fruitful ministry for the records of the session show that soldiers were frequently received into the membership of the church. As the war dragged on Dr. Pryor began to feel that it was his duty to enter the service of the country. On June 30, 1863, he resigned his pastorate and entered actively the chaplaincy of the Confederate Army. In her Reminiscences of Peace and War, the wife of Roger A. Pryor tells of one occasion when Dr. Pryor was captured by a party of Union Calvarymen. He had explained his noncombatant role, but his captors still would not release him. Later during the night he wandered some distance from the guard, and was able to escape, leaving his horse tied to a tree within the circle around the fire. Mrs.



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Pryor reports that her father-in-law explained thusly, "Which proves my dear, that a clergyman is not worth as much as a good horse in time of war."<sup>1</sup>

After the war ended, Dr. Pryor returned to Nottoway County, where he had spent the first twenty-one years of his ministry. He was twice Moderator of the Synod of Virginia and in 1883 Moderator of the General Assembly, the highest governing body of the denomination. Pryor Memorial Church at Crewe was named in his honor, and his grave is beneath the floor of that church. His service to the church did not end with the death, however. In 1942, his great-grandson, William Baird McIlwaine, Jr., became pastor of Second Presbyterian Church. The tradition of noble service continues with the son of Dr. McIlwaine, Benjamin Harrison McIlwaine, a well-trained physician, a gifted musician, and a devoted elder who has served most ably on the session of Second Church.

The pastor who succeeded Dr. Pryor also had strong ties with the war effort. In the early months of the war the Rev. John Miller, a native of Princeton, New Jersey, and a graduate of Princeton University, was serving the Fairfield Presbyterian Church in the Valley of Virginia. Realizing that his area needed a strong defense against the invasion of Union troops, Dr. Miller issued a call for volunteers to expand the Fairfield Rifle Company. Dr. Miller's request for volunteers proved successful and the company organization was completed at Fairfield on July 10, 1861, with 120 officers and men. The unit was named in honor of Miss Lillie McDowell, daughter of former governor, James McDowell. Miss McDowell provided much of the equipment for the unit and visited the camp every day while it was training. She later married a member of the company. Miss McDowell's sister was the wife of Dr. Miller.

Dr. Miller was elected captain of the company, which became engaged in the conflict under the name of the Second Rockbridge Artillery. Dr. Miller's effective leadership was cited on one occasion by Col. Edward Johnson of the 12th Georgia Infantry: "Captain Miller opened upon the enemy with his guns and behaved with great gallantry, exposing himself at his guns to the fire of the enemy's sharpshooters." The Rockbridge Artillery played a significant role in the expanding conflict, and was present at Appomattox to surrender with the rest of Lee's army. Dr. Miller

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was released from his command in October 1863 to accept a call to the Second Presbyterian Church of Petersburg.

Dr. McIlwaine, a later pastor of Second Church, notes that Dr. Miller was forty-four years old when he began his ministry at Second Church. He evaluates his ministry thusly: "It was just in the midst of the war, with all the sorrow and loss from which Petersburg suffered so severely. From his experience in the army, he knew the needs of the hour. He was an unusual character. It is needless to say that his pastorate of eight years, while marked by many of his personal idiosyncrasies, was one of unusual brilliance. In his enthusiasm and self-forgetfulness he is known to have stepped off the high pulpit elevation, while in moments of unusual earnestness he would leave the pulpit entirely and preach from the aisles of the church. An old resident remarked that he preached all the way from the pulpit to the door."

The Progress Index of October 1, 1933, reports a memorable incident which took place on a Sunday afternoon in the spring of 1865: "It was about four o'clock on a Sunday afternoon, and the congregation was assembling for worship at the Second Presbyterian Church, while the bell overhead was ringing out the call. Shells were passing to the westward on Washington Street with unusual frequency, yet the people seemed almost indifferent to the situation and its danger, so, while the ladies were holding converse in the spacious front yard a 32 pound Federal shell embedded itself in the eastern wall of the church, giving all within a heavy jar. The pastor, Rev. John Miller, at once proceeded to dig out the intended engine of death and destruction. He had been a captain of Confederate artillery; then he was made a chaplain; finally taking up the work at Second Church. Providence was good to the people. The shell did not explode, if so, the dead and wounded may have numbered more than a score. Having extricated the shell, Mr. Miller placed it on his shoulder and walked down and laid it on the Communion Table. Then he ascended to his pulpit, telling his people, 'It is evident that the enemy have the exact range of our church, and I am not willing to keep you here exposed to danger to listen to anything I have to say. We will have the benediction and be dismissed.' With no outward sign of alarm, the congregation arose, received the benediction, and the incident was closed, the congregation leaving in their usually orderly manner."

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The unexploded shell did not go to waste: Dr. Miller gave the enclosed powder to young boys in the congregation for their fall hunting. This incident may have promoted a communication from the Rev. W. H. Platt, rector of St. Paul's Church, where General Robert E. Lee frequently worshiped. This church is located only two blocks to the east of Second Church. The letter was addressed to General Meade, suggesting that it would be a graceful act on his part if he would dispense with gunnery on Sundays, so that the people of Petersburg could attend their services without risking life and limb. For quite a while after sending this letter, it is said that the Federal gunners rested on Sundays along with the citizens of Petersburg.

Confederate soldiers stationed on the battlefronts around Petersburg frequently found the opportunity to worship at Second Presbyterian Church and other churches in the city. One of those soldiers who exhibited a particular admiration for Dr. Miller was Captain Henry A. Chambers, of Iredell County, North Carolina. He noted in his diary of the 8th of January, 1865: "In the morning at eleven we went to the Washington Street (Second) Presbyterian Church and heard its talented pastor, Rev. John Miller. It was the day of communion and the sermon was of an appropriate character, able, learned, beautiful in its structure and practical in its bearings."<sup>3</sup> It is understandable that a yankee preacher from Princeton, who had already distinguished himself as an artillery officer in the Valley of Virginia, would have a strong appeal to the soldiers who were defending the Confederate cause from the trenches around Petersburg.

On the night of April 2, 1865, General Lee's army began its evacuation of Petersburg, marching down Washington Street past Second Church. On the front steps of the church they left the body of a Confederate soldier. Attached to his uniform was a note with the inscription: "Frank E. Coyle, Third Company of Washington Artillery, killed at the front on Sunday. Some kind friend will please bury this man." The kind friend proved to be Jack Hill, a slave of Mrs. Julia Meade, who lived near the church. He was assisted in the task of digging the grave by William H. Tappey, and Mr. Morrison, who lived across the street from Second Church. Officiating at the burial in the yard of Second Church was the Rev. Churchill J. Gibson, rector of Grace Episcopal Church.

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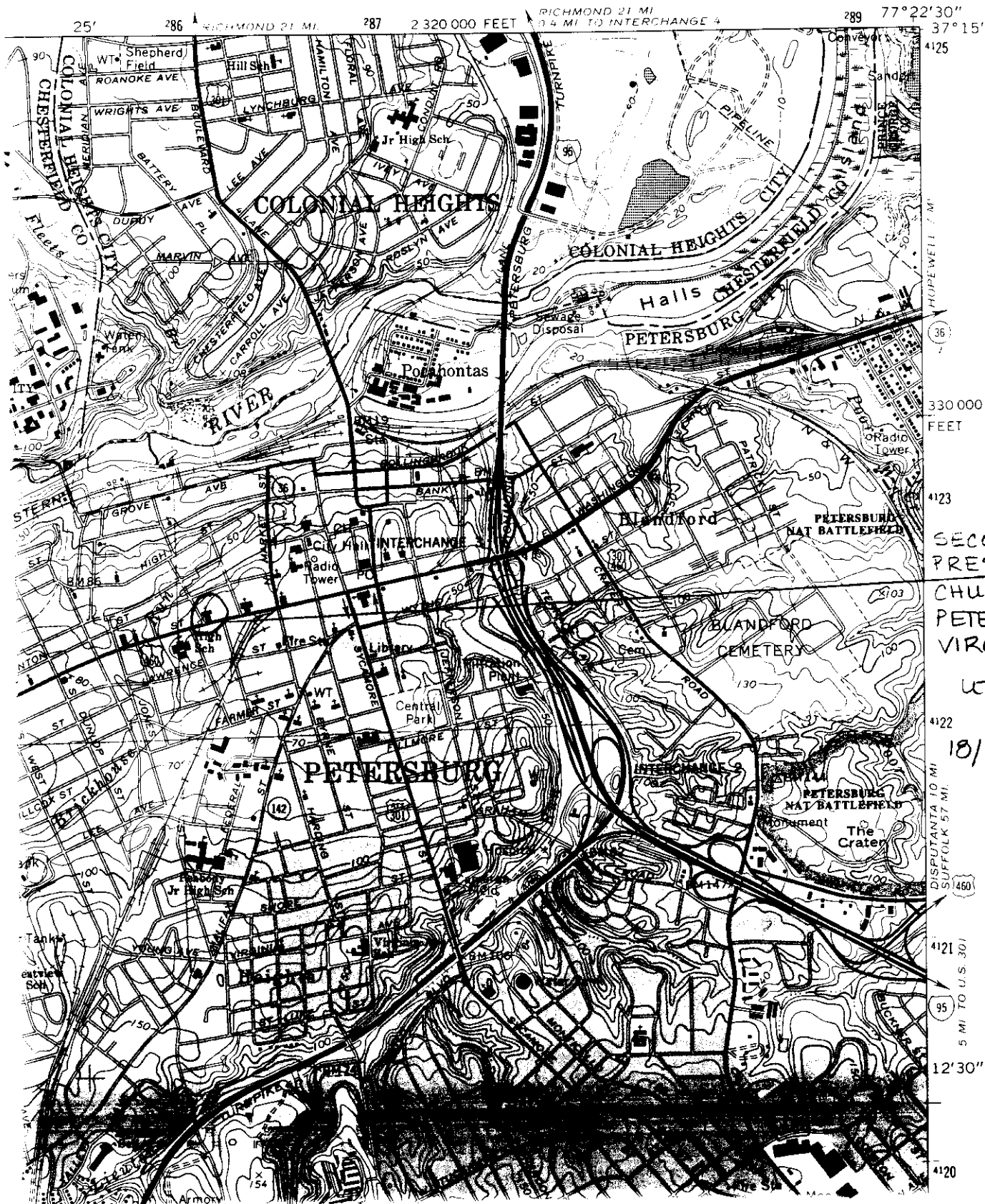
soldier was rebuked by an officer of high rank, who joined Mr. Gibson in throwing shovels of earth into the grave. At this moment a company of Federals approached from Perry Street, came to a halt before the grave, and stood at attention until the burial was completed. Writing to a newspaper in New Orleans, Mrs. Morrison reported, "No more beautiful tribute of respect was ever paid in this or any other war to a fallen foe. No Southerner, from the Potomac to the Rio Grande, had grander funeral obsequies, or was buried by saintlier hands, than Frank E. Coyle, Third Company of Washington Artillery."

The grave of Frank E. Coyle and other Confederate soldiers buried in the yard of Second Church were later moved to other sites.

Dr. Miller remained with his congregation during the Reconstruction years, helping to rebuild the city and continuing his ministries to the church. More than a hundred members were added to the church roll during his pastorate. On June 1, 1871, Dr. Miller retired to his home in Princeton, New Jersey, where he wrote several books on Christian doctrine and supplied the pulpit of one of the Princeton churches.

PETERSBURG QUADRANGLE  
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