



PROVIDENCE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH



This report was written on July 6, 1976

1. Name and location of the property: The property known as the Providence Presbyterian Church is located on Providence Rd. in the southeastern portion of Mecklenburg County.

2. Name, location, and telephone numbers of the present owners and occupants of the property:

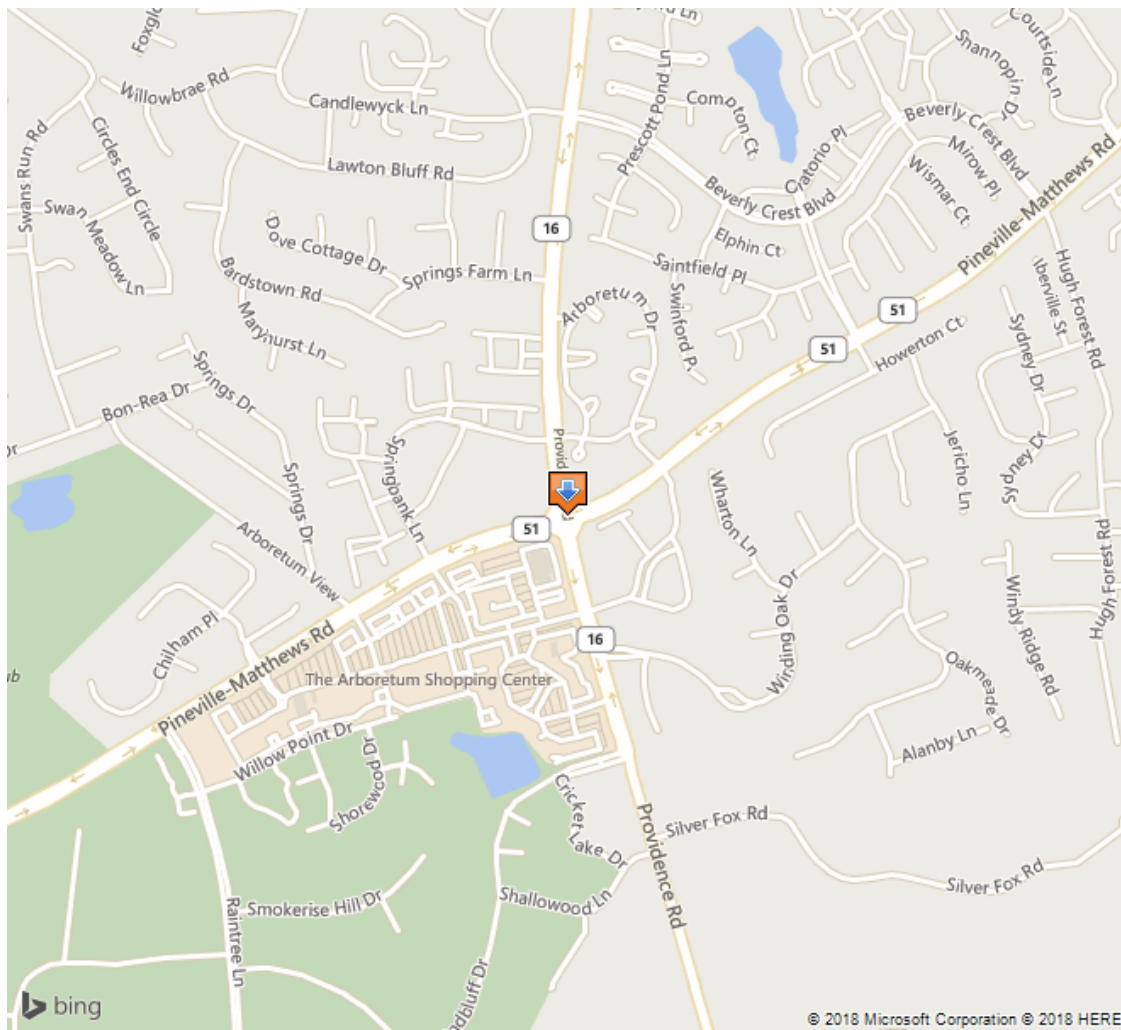
The present owner of the property is:

Providence Presbyterian Church
10140 Providence Rd.
Matthews, NC 28105

Telephone: (704) 847-9585

3. Representative photographs of the property: Representative photographs of the property are included in this report.

4. A map depicting the location of the property: This report contains two maps. Map A shows the 3.99 acres which the Church owns on the western side of Providence Rd. Map B shows the 7.28 acres which the Church owns on the eastern side of Providence Rd.



5. Current Deed Book Reference to the Property: The most recent reference to both parcels is found in Mecklenburg County Deed Book 2665 at page 5.

6. A brief historical sketch of the property:

Providence Presbyterian Church is one of the oldest Christian congregations in Mecklenburg County. Indeed, Alexander Craighead, the noted minister of Colonial Mecklenburg, regarded it as "one of his houses." The first meetinghouse was a simple log structure which was erected in 1767 and stood to the east of the cemetery overlooking a rock spring. William Richardson, pastor of the Waxhaws Presbyterian Church and son-in-law of Alexander Craighead, preached the first sermon in the edifice as the initial minister at Providence. Members of the congregation played an important part in local affairs during the turbulent years of the American Revolution. Three signers of what according to some was the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence are buried in the Providence Cemetery: Neill Morrison, John Flennekin, and Henry Downs. General Cornwallis' Army moved through the area on its march toward Charlotte in September 1780. In 1804, a new and larger building was erected to the east of Providence Rd. and in front of the cemetery. The first old log structure now became a schoolroom, the Providence Congregation. Also worth noting in this regard is the fact that two of its early ministers, Dr. Robert Hall Morrison and Dr. Samuel Williamson, later became the first two presidents of Davidson College.

The present sanctuary dates from 1858. The refinement of the structure, especially of the interior, confirms that these were prosperous times. The farmers of the Providence Community were enjoying the benefits of the cotton economy of the Old South. Of course, their way of life was to end with the defeat of the Confederacy. But the church remains as a symbol of the affluence of that era. It continues to serve as the place of worship for the congregation.

7. A brief architectural description of the property: This report contains an architectural description by Jack O. Boyte, A.I.A.

8. Documentation of why and in what ways the property meets the criteria set forth in N.C.G.S. 160A-399.4:

a. Historical and cultural significance: The historical and cultural significance of the property known as the Providence Presbyterian Church rests upon two factors. First, it has strong associative ties with one of the oldest Presbyterian congregations in the county. Second, it has architectural significance as one of the oldest and most refined frame churches in the county.

b. Suitability for preservation and restoration: Providence Presbyterian Church retains much of its original integrity and therefore is suitable for preservation and restoration.

c. Educational value: Providence Presbyterian Church has educational value as one of the oldest frame churches in Mecklenburg County. Moreover, its members have played a significant role in local history since the coming of permanent white settlers to this region.

d. Cost of acquisition, restoration, maintenance or repair: The Commission has no intention of purchasing this property nor is it aware of any intention of the owners to sell. The Commission asserts that all costs associated with renovating and maintaining the property will be paid by the owner or subsequent owners of the property.

e. Possibilities for adaptive or alternative use of the property: The Commission concurs with the present owners' intention to maintain the property as a viable church. The structure and grounds, however, could be adapted to a wide variety of uses.

f. Appraised value: The current tax appraisal value of the improvements on the property is \$108,990. The current tax appraisal value of the land is \$55,580. The Commission is aware that designation of the property would allow the owner to apply for a special tax classification.

g. The administrative and financial responsibility of and any person or organization willing to underwrite all or a portion of such costs: As indicated earlier, the Commission has no intention of purchasing this property. Furthermore, the Commission assumes that all costs associated with the property will be met by whatever part, now owns or will subsequently own the property. Clearly, the present owners have dominated the capacity to meet the expenses associated with maintaining the property.

9. Documentation of why and in what ways the property meets the criteria established for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places: The Commission judges that the property known as the Providence Presbyterian Church does meet the criteria of the National Register of Historic Places. Basic to the Commission's judgment is the knowledge of the fact that the National Register of Historic Places functions to identify properties of local and state historic significance. The Commission believes that the property known as the Providence Presbyterian Church is of local and regional historic significance and thereby meets the criteria of the National Register of Historic Places.

10. Documentation of why and in what ways the property is of significance to Charlotte and/or Mecklenburg County: As noted earlier, the property known as the Providence Presbyterian Church is of local historic importance for two reasons. First, it has strong associative ties with one of the oldest Presbyterian congregation in Mecklenburg County. Second, the structure itself is one of the oldest and most refined frame churches in Mecklenburg County.

Bibliography

An Inventory of Older Buildings in Mecklenburg County and Charlotte for the Historic Properties Commission.

Providence Presbyterian Church 1767-1967 (a pamphlet distributed by Providence Presbyterian Church).

Records of the Mecklenburg County Register of Deeds Office.

Records of the Mecklenburg County Tax Office.

Date of Preparation of this report: July 6, 1976

Prepared by: Dr. Dan L. Morrill, Director
Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Properties Commission
139 Middleton Dr.
Charlotte, NC 28207

Telephone: (703) 332-2726

Architectural Description

The building is a simple rectangle with high side walls and plain gabled ends. In the gabled north end, the centered entrance consists of eight foot high double doors with a six light transom window above. Over this are three tall windows, one wide and two narrow. Flanking the entrance are towering three sash windows. Rising from chair rail

height, these windows reach some twenty five feet above the church floor, and contain a total of twenty seven lights. At each side four similar windows occur and at the south gabled end, two units flank the interior preaching platform. Unexpectedly, one may see original louvered blinds at all windows. These green-painted three section blinds have been remarkably preserved with careful painting and repair and still hang on original wrought iron hardware. The structure rests on low foundation walls of cut Mecklenburg granite. Exterior walls are white painted square edged narrow-lapped siding. Starting at the foundation with no molding band, these walls rise about thirty feet to a narrow bed mold under a wide overhang.

Typical of meeting house design, this cornice configuration includes a wide overhang, which is the dominant exterior feature. Projecting out some two feet from the wall, the overhang fascia is a narrow board with a wide shingle mold and no gutter. At the gabled ends, this wide overhang continues up the rake with similar molding trim. The roof has two uninterrupted surfaces rising steeply to a high ridge line. Upon entering the narthex through the original entrance doors, one encounters a small room which has seen several alterations. Originally two doors led to side aisles in the nave. These were removed in modern times and a center double door installed. Originally the entrance to the gallery seating was through an exterior door at the right side front and up steep stairs. This door was removed in recent years and a new door installed from the narthex to altered, shallow rise stairs. One other change in the interior front was the enlargement of the small left side room to provide an interior session room. Fortunately, the nave, chancel, and gallery construction have remained unaltered, and they show the fine craftsmanship of these original features today. Upon entering the nave, one encounters a remarkably preserved room.

Little change has occurred in this sanctuary since its original construction. Throughout this rectangular room are hand-planed pews facing a raised pulpit platform at one end. With carefully shaped seats and backs these pews show clearly the skill of the early craftsmen. The pew end panels show rare decorative treatment in this severely simple building. The panel tops are gracefully shaped curved rails and in the lower panels are elaborate scroll inserts. The wide-center section of pews is divided by a solid rail running front to rear. Traditionally this is the dividing line between seating for men and women. Along the full length at each side, narrow galleries are supported by widely spaced tapered wood columns. The original wide plank flooring remains, now covered with carpeting. Walls are horizontal tongue and grooved boards. A fine molded chair rail occurs at window sill height on all walls and below this are recessed panels with molded edges.

The high ceiling has a pattern of wide hand planed boards running the length of the room between raised battens with molded edges. There is no crown mold. At the face of the balcony framing there are also molded recessed panels of wide hand planed

boards. Above this are round wood rails connecting square posts which are capped with ornamental wooden balls. In the roof framing are remarkable examples of the skill of the early carpenters. Huge rafters, joists and braces are joined in tightly fitted mortise and tenoned joints to form widely spaced roof trusses. These members show typical parallel saw marks of water powered mills, and all joints are secured with the nails and pegs. Purlins of heavy hand hewn pine spans the space between these trusses and support the ceiling and the original shingling strips. In the garret, many of the original hand split shingles remain where they fell when new roofing was installed. Examples of the early manufactured nails remain in the shingling strips and shingles. The character of this sanctuary reflects the simplicity of meeting house architecture. Elaboration is deliberately avoided and molded trim kept to a minimum. In its simplicity the builders created a strikingly handsome building and one which illustrates the severity of life in early Mecklenburg. The Providence Congregation has, through the years, carefully preserved this remarkable building. It is a rare treat to find a church which has been in constant use for over 125 years so little changed. This meeting house is an architectural treasure.