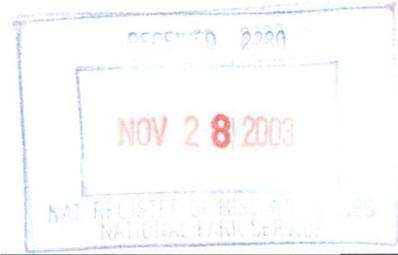


1376

(Oct. 1990)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service



NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM

1. NAME OF PROPERTY

HISTORIC NAME: Central Christian Church
OTHER NAME/SITE NUMBER: N/A

2. LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER: 2611 Wesley Street
CITY OR TOWN: Greenville
STATE: Texas CODE: TX COUNTY: Hunt CODE: 231

NOT FOR PUBLICATION: N/A
VICINITY: N/A
ZIP CODE: 75401

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 () nationally) () statewide) (x locally). () See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

[Handwritten Signature]
Signature of certifying official

11/24/03
Date

State Historic Preservation Officer, Texas Historical Commission
State or Federal agency and bureau

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

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that this property is:

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

[Handwritten Signature]
Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

1-6-04

5. CLASSIFICATION

OWNERSHIP OF PROPERTY: Private

CATEGORY OF PROPERTY: Building

NUMBER OF RESOURCES WITHIN PROPERTY:	CONTRIBUTING	NONCONTRIBUTING
	1	0 BUILDINGS
	0	0 SITES
	0	0 STRUCTURES
	0	0 OBJECTS
	1	0 TOTAL

NUMBER OF CONTRIBUTING RESOURCES PREVIOUSLY LISTED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER: 0

NAME OF RELATED MULTIPLE PROPERTY LISTING: N/A

6. FUNCTION OR USE

HISTORIC FUNCTIONS: RELIGION/religious facility = Church

CURRENT FUNCTIONS: RELIGION/religious facility = Church

7. DESCRIPTION

ARCHITECTURAL CLASSIFICATION: Late 19th and 20th Century Revivals; Late Gothic Revival

MATERIALS: FOUNDATION BRICK
WALLS BRICK
ROOF METAL
OTHER GLASS

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION (see continuation sheets 7-5 through 7-8).

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 7 Page 5

Central Christian Church
Greenville, Hunt County, Texas

Narrative Description

The 1899 Central Christian Church, a 2-story building with a raised basement, occupies the southeast corner of Wesley and Washington Streets on a gentle sloping plane in downtown Greenville, Texas. Designed by noted Dallas architect, James E. Flanders, the church's style is taken mostly from the Late Gothic Revival, but it also includes some distinct Prairie elements. It is constructed of multicolored and hard-fired orange brick with cast stone detailing. The church has a modified rectangular plan, with a prominent corner tower topped by a tall spire and smaller towers on each of the main façades. The building's complex roof includes steep gables protruding from the main hipped roof, all of which are covered with pressed metal, fish scale shingles. The west and north façades also feature large stained glass windows and unique patterned brickwork. The building's minimal alterations include the 1948 addition of an office and education building, which is attached to the church by a narrow hallway, and the more recent addition of a wheelchair accessible ramp. Due to the superior original workmanship and previous rehabilitation and preservation efforts, the building remains in good condition and retains a high degree of its historical and architectural integrity.

The 1899 Central Christian Church is a 2-story Late Gothic Revival brick building with a raised basement. The building sits in the midst of downtown Greenville, Texas, just two blocks west of the town square and the historic Hunt County Courthouse. It occupies the southeast corner of Wesley and Washington Streets, with minimal setbacks befitting its downtown location. (Photo 1) The site is located on a slight rise of the land, amidst a gentle slope that continues east to the Sabine River. A parking lot for the congregation abuts the east side of the church. The south side includes an L-shaped lawn and a single tree, as well as the 1948 office and education building, which is setback farther from the street. The shallow setbacks allow only minimal landscaping, but hedges and shrubs are placed on portions of all elevations. The building's modified rectangular footprint contains 9,700 square feet. (Figure-15)

The complex formal arrangement of the Central Christian Church is unified by a consistent vertical division into three sections. The walls of the raised basement are constructed of multiple shades of buff bricks laid in the American Bond pattern. This relatively short base is topped by a protruding, five-inch cast stone ledge, which also serves as a sill for the building's numerous stained glass windows. The middle section, which extends to the spring point of the building's pointed arch openings, is constructed with hard-fired orange bricks, also laid in the American Bond pattern. A string course consisting of three rows of buff bricks and a rounded cast stone ledge caps this middle section. The cast stone ledge continues around the pointed arch openings, also constructed of buff bricks, with cast stone spring points and keystones. The walls' upper section, extending to the cornice line of the hipped roof and continuing into the gables, features hard-fired orange bricks arranged in a decorative pattern. Alternating bricks laid in a mousetooth pattern are arranged in evenly spaced, vertical rows that break up the walls' flat planes to create a unique and striking visual effect.

The church's street-fronting west and north façades are the most elaborate, and they intersect at the building's focal point, the corner tower. The west and north sides of the tower are identical, with a double door entrance centered in each. The entrances are above grade, accessed by concrete steps flanked by stepped brick piers capped with stone. Each entrance is topped with a large, pointed arch stained glass transom. The tower's base follows the building's tripartite vertical division, and the transoms' surrounds match those of the other windows. The entries are distinguished, however, by the addition of a second cast stone surround that mimics the form of the building's large gables. These triangular surrounds extend into the belfry section of the tower, which is otherwise separated from the base by a cornice. The cornice features a pressed metal frieze with an organic, Sullivan-esque pattern. The tower's tall belfry section is sheathed entirely in sheet metal, painted a sandstone color to match the cast stone. The corners of this section protrude slightly, resembling

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 7 Page 6

Central Christian Church
Greenville, Hunt County, Texas

pilasters, and flare out over the cornice at the bottom. Each of the "pilasters" is decorated with a simple geometric ornament consisting of an open-bottomed triangle over a small rectangular window. The central section of each side includes three vertical rows of louvers that mimic the mousetooth pattern of the brick walls. A simple protruding band caps the belfry section and creates a relatively wide frieze below the spire. In the frieze, the "pilasters" are decorated with a small wreath, and the central section features a simple geometric pattern of rectangles. The tall, steep octagonal spire includes finials at each corner and a gabled dormer with a blind, pointed arch opening on each side.

Continuing down the west and north façades, each side features a prominent central gable flanked on either side by a narrow recessed section with a single, pointed arch stained glass window. On each façade, the gable is dominated by a large, central pointed arch opening, roughly 10 ½ by 17 feet. That opening is further divided to include several stained glass windows, including three rounded arch windows arranged in a Palladian style, with pointed arch sections above each side and three circular windows inset above the middle. The gable itself is outlined with a decorative vergeboard that mimics the pattern of the corner tower's frieze. A cross member decorated with the same pattern separates a triangular section in the top of the gable, which includes three narrow vertical openings.

The west façade terminates in another tower. Although much shorter and less elaborately decorated than the corner tower, it also includes a central, double-door entry with a pointed arch, stained glass transom. The middle section of the tower is sheathed in sheet metal but lacks any applied decoration. A triple window pierces the west and south sides of this section. The frieze of the southwest tower includes a rectangular pattern similar to that on the central tower, but the rectangles are recessed instead of protruding. The tower's roof is a steep but simple, four-sided pyramid, with gabled dormers on each side decorated with a sunburst pattern.

The north façade also includes an additional tower, to the east of its central gable. The tower is unique, however, in that it abuts a substantial two-story section of the church and houses two levels itself. A wheelchair-accessible ramp has also been added to access the entrance. To accommodate the second floor, including a pointed arch, stained glass window, the northeast tower's base rises higher than the others' and the transom above its entry is a much shallower pointed arch. The middle section of the tower includes a group of three windows on its north and west sides, and the frieze above features decorative wreaths. Like the southwest tower, the roof is pyramidal, but its gabled dormers are nearly identical to those of the corner tower. As mentioned above, the tower abuts a substantial hip-roofed, two-story section on the east end of the building. It projects out from the tower in a polygonal shape and has pointed arch, stained glass windows on both levels. Although it conforms to the church's tripartite vertical divisions, the upper section is much taller, and a second string course connects the spring points of the upper-level windows.

The simpler east elevation, which faces the church's parking lot, is 2 stories tall across its entire length. The mousetooth pattern on the main façades extends only partially down this elevation, to a protruding section that houses a chimney from an early heating system. Five stained glass, pointed arch windows are arranged across the first floor, with four remaining on the second. The fifth window opening on the second level was converted to an exit door, from which a metal fire escape leads down to the ground.

The south elevation is also less ornamented than the west and north façades. It is now even further de-emphasized, as much of it is concealed by the 1948 office and education building, which connects to the south side through a narrow corridor. The two-story section of the church wraps around the east end of the south elevation, with two stained glass, pointed arch windows on each level. The elevation also includes the one exterior entrance to the basement and a polygonal apse that houses the organ and choir loft.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 7 Page 7

Central Christian Church
Greenville, Hunt County, Texas

Only minimal changes have affected the church's interior, which retains almost total integrity of its original design. The main corner entrance and each of the side entries on Wesley and Washington Streets lead through small vestibules into alternate corners of the main sanctuary, a large open space with solid oak pews arranged in a semi-circle around the central pulpit. (Figure-16) The high ceilings are covered with pressed metal painted white, and the walls of the sanctuary are plastered. The numerous stained glass windows fill the space with a soft light. The floors of the sanctuary, covered in plush red carpet, slope down toward the pulpit, which sits on a raised platform with the church's pipe organ behind. To the side of the pulpit, and also slightly raised, is an enclosed space accessible from either the pulpit or the sanctuary. The enclosed area includes a hallway with access up to the choir loft and down to the baptistery tank, as well as two bathrooms, a room for preparing communion, and a small meeting room. The latter features double folding doors that open onto the sanctuary. An interesting original feature of the church is a large moveable wood wall that runs the length of the sanctuary from the northeast vestibule to the raised section. Thirty-three feet long and 13 feet tall, the entire wall could be lowered to separate two sections of the sanctuary and then raised back into the attic, using a hand crank to operate a system of cables and pulleys.

Although not a pure example of the form, the interior arrangement of the Central Christian Church represents a version of the "Akron plan," a popular choice for late 19th and early 20th-century Protestant churches. Akron plan churches feature a large central space arranged around the pulpit, often semi-circular in shape and accessed from corner entrances. Classrooms were arranged around the perimeter of this space with large folding or sliding doors that allowed them to be alternately separated from or included in the sanctuary, allowing Sunday school students to study their lessons but also participate in portions of the mass with the whole congregation. Protestant churches across the United States adapted the concept of the Akron plan to their own needs and circumstances, and it seems the solution at Greenville's Central Christian Church was to provide for the separation of an entire section of the sanctuary.

The church's second floor includes Young's Memorial Chapel, named for an early contributor to the church, and three smaller Sunday school rooms that are now used for storage. A door provides access to the attic over the sanctuary and also leads to the interior portion of the three towers.

The building also has a partial basement that still houses an antique ice maker and a coal furnace, although both are no longer used. The sanctuary was originally cooled with natural ventilation, by lowering and raising the large windows with a long stick. A clever method of cooling was later devised, however, whereby ice was made during the week with fans used to circulate the cooled air over the sanctuary on Sunday. The ice maker is the remaining evidence of this system.

The church has undergone several rehabilitations over the years, and some minor changes have been made. In 1920 the original organ was replaced by a pipe organ manufactured by the Austin Company of Hartford, Connecticut. In 1993, the same pipe organ was completely rebuilt by the Eberhart Company of Loomis, Nebraska.¹ A modern sound system and new lighting have also been installed on the interior.

In 1948, a three-story office/education building was constructed on the south side of the church, designed by architect R. W. Ragsdale and built by Eddie Rutherford. The simple rectangular brick building was sensitively designed to relate but defer to the church itself. Two distinct types of brick, similar to those on the church, were used, and the building incorporates some subtle references to the Gothic Revival, including parapeted gable ends with no rake, stepped parapets

¹ Historical Committee, *Historical Documents of Central Christian Church* (Greenville: Lake Printing Company, 1979): 3.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 7 Page 8

Central Christian Church
Greenville, Hunt County, Texas

with triangular pediments across the front, and stylized turrets at the corners of the entry portico. Metal casement windows and a simple, sleek aesthetic, however, clearly identify the building with its own era. The architect was also instructed to make the connection between the two buildings as narrow as possible, to minimize change to the original building.²

In 1986 the church structure had fallen into a state of disrepair, and the congregation approved \$250,000 for the building's rehabilitation. Due to the age of the church, the wooden plates between the foundation and brick structure had dry rotted and settling had occurred. The entire building was jacked up and new wooden plates and some of the cross sections were replaced. On the interior of the sanctuary the walls and ceiling were repainted. The original electrical wiring was removed and replaced, new air conditioners and new carpeting was installed. The large moveable wall, which although interesting was relatively impractical, was raised into the attic to stay permanently. On the exterior, windows, doors and gutters were repaired. The bricks were cleaned with high-pressure water and chemicals. The mortar between the bricks was removed to three-fourths of an inch and then "tuckpointed." The bricks were also coated with a waterproofing agent. This rehabilitation was accomplished by The Jimmy Muckelroy Company of Clarksville City, Texas and was completed in 1988.³

In 1998 a wheelchair accessible ramp with handrails was installed by William's Masonry Inc. of Greenville, Texas. This called for removing the original steps on the northeast Washington Street entrance and replacing the steps with a ramp. The ramp has a gentle slope to the east and access to the parking lot. The bricks used were purposely chosen to closely match the lower section of the church walls, and it detracts very little from the overall appearance of the façade.

None of these changes to the Central Christian Church are significant, and the building retains a remarkably high degree of integrity. Due largely to their superior quality, the design, materials and workmanship of the church have required only maintenance and expected repairs. The simple and flexible interior plan has also continued to serve the congregation with very minimal alteration. With its location near Greenville's historic downtown, the building also retains integrity of setting and feeling. The church's continued use conveys its longstanding association with the same congregation, and the unique, unaltered design also clearly identifies it with architect James E. Flanders.

² Historical Committee, 3.

³ Historical Committee, 3.

8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

APPLICABLE NATIONAL REGISTER CRITERIA

- 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 VALUE, 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: A

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE: Architecture

PERIOD OF SIGNIFICANCE: 1899-1948

SIGNIFICANT DATES: 1899, 1948

SIGNIFICANT PERSON: N/A

CULTURAL AFFILIATION: N/A

ARCHITECT/BUILDER: Flanders, James E. = Architect; Ragsdale, R.W.=Architect (1948 addition)

NARRATIVE STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE (see continuation sheets 8-9 through 8-13).

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHIC REFERENCES

BIBLIOGRAPHY (see continuation sheet 9-14).

PREVIOUS DOCUMENTATION ON FILE (NPS): N/A

- 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 (*Texas Historical Commission*)
- Other state agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other -- Specify Repository:

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 9

Central Christian Church
Greenville, Hunt County, Texas

Statement of Significance

The 1899 Central Christian Church is a significant and intact example of the unique ecclesiastical architecture of James E. Flanders. A prolific and accomplished architect, Flanders is especially admired for a series of early 20th-century churches that united traditional Gothic Revival features with increasingly prominent references to the Prairie style. The earliest known surviving example of a Flanders-designed church, the Central Christian Church illustrates the beginning stages of this development, during which subtle elements of the Sullivanese and Prairie styles were integrated into primarily Late Victorian designs. With minimal alterations, the building clearly reflects Flanders' architectural mastery and his unique gift for blending a broad range of influences in harmonious and beautifully executed original designs. In addition to representing the work of a master architect and possessing high artistic value, the Central Christian Church is also Greenville's most characteristic example of a late 19th-century church. It is nominated under Criterion C in the area of Architecture at the local level of significance. Criteria Consideration A for religious properties is met because the church is significant as an outstanding example of Late Gothic Revival architecture.

19th-Century Development of Hunt County and Greenville

Hunt County, Texas lies in the northeastern part of the state, in the Blackland Prairie northeast of Dallas. Anglo settlement began slowly around 1839, at which time they found only small groups of Kiowa Indians inhabiting the area. The Kiowa left soon after and posed no threat to the settlers, but development was slow nonetheless. When the county was formed in 1846, it had an estimated population of only 350. It was named for General Memucan Hunt, an instrumental figure in the U.S. annexation of Texas, and the town of Greenville, named for Mier expedition member Thomas Jefferson Green, was established as county seat.⁴

Hunt County grew more rapidly after its official establishment, with most settlers coming from Southern states. Despite the area's ideal conditions for growing cotton, a lack of transportation prevented the development of a plantation economy, and most residents operated self-sufficient small farms. In 1860, the county's Anglo population had grown to 6,053, but only 142 owned slaves, who totaled 577. Despite their relatively small numbers, the elite group of slaveholders dominated the county both economically and politically.⁵

Because most of the county's residents lived on farms, Greenville grew more slowly than the county as a whole. A log courthouse and a post office were constructed in 1847. School was held in the courthouse until a private one-room school was built in 1850. Commercial development began around the courthouse square in the 1850s and included a general merchandise store, three taverns, three grocery stores, a law office, two hotels, a drug store, and a few other businesses. The Masons and Odd Fellows also built halls in Greenville prior to the Civil War.⁶

The most significant catalyst to the 19th-century development of Hunt County and Greenville was the 1880 arrival of the Missouri, Kansas and Texas Extensions Railway. It was followed by the East Line and Red River Railroad in 1881, the Dallas and Greenville Railway in 1886, the St. Louis Southwestern ("Cotton Belt") Railway in 1887, and the Texas Midland line in 1896. Greenville quickly became a regional center of rail transportation, encouraging rapid growth of

⁴ "HUNT COUNTY," The Handbook of Texas Online, <<http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/view/HH/hch22.html>>.

⁵ "HUNT COUNTY."

⁶ "GREENVILLE, TX," The Handbook of Texas Online. <<http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/view/GG/heg3.html>>.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 10

Central Christian Church
Greenville, Hunt County, Texas

Hunt County's cotton industry and equally the development of associated commercial and financial services in Greenville. By 1884, Greenville had become a leading cotton marketing location, and its population had grown to 3,000. The community supported fifteen businesses, including two banks, cotton gins, flour mills, and even an opera house capable of seating 800.⁷

Greenville's rapid growth continued over the next few decades. A water works began operation in 1889, and in 1891 the city began operation of the first municipally owned electrical utility in Texas. By 1892, Greenville was shipping over \$1 million worth of cotton each year and supported 200 businesses. The city's population grew to 8,500 by 1900, and would reach 14,000 in 1914, when Greenville was home to the largest cottonseed oil mill in the South.⁸ It was during this climate of rapid growth and economic prosperity that the Central Christian Church was constructed.

The Central Christian Church

The congregation that would later become the Central Christian Church began meeting in 1848, just two years after Hunt County was established, in the home of Leonard Robey, a pioneer settler whose farm lay south of Greenville. Meetings continued to be held in private homes until after the Civil War. The first church building was a square log structure built on land donated by the Robeys, one of few churches in town at the time. In 1876, Elder James Pickens held a revival meeting in a building on Lee Street, one block west of the town square, which had a significant impact on the community and encouraged continued growth of the congregation. Under the ministry of Dr. D. W. Pritchett, the growth continued and the need for a larger building was increasingly apparent. Services were held in other buildings around town until 1888, when the decision was made to erect the current building.⁹

Unfortunately, the donation deed for the land to be used was never filed and was lost. To perfect title to the lot, Mr. Robey executed a quitclaim deed to the Trustees of the First Christian Church on September 23, 1898. Soon after, they hired Dallas architect James E. Flanders, who had already established his reputation as a prominent church designer. The name of the church was changed in 1898 to the Central Christian Church, and a charter was applied for and obtained from the State of Texas. Construction of the Central Christian Church began by the end of 1898, and the building was completed and dedicated in the summer of 1899.¹⁰

The 1948 Addition

In 1948, a three-story attached addition was built on the south side of the church. The Architect, R.W. Ragsdale, moderated the impact on the original by minimizing the connection between the two buildings and designing a sensitive and compatible addition. The congregation spent \$200,000 to construct the building, which has now been named Briscoe Hall in honor of a family that left a large endowment for maintenance of the buildings. The addition is used for educational and administrative functions.¹¹

⁷ "GREENVILLE, TX."

⁸ "GREENVILLE, TX."

⁹ Walworth W. Harrison, *History of Greenville and Hunt County* (Waco: Library Binding Company,): 1.

¹⁰ Historical Committee, *Historical Documents of Central Christian Church* (Greenville: Lake Printing Company, 1979): 2.

¹¹ Historical Committee, 3.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 11

Central Christian Church
Greenville, Hunt County, Texas

Architect James E. Flanders

James Edward Flanders (1849-1928) was a significant and prolific architect in Texas during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Born in 1849 in Chicago, he attended public schools (where, interestingly, he was a classmate of Daniel Burnham) before beginning his architectural training as a draftsman and apprentice with the firm of Schmid and Zucker around 1871. He moved to Minneapolis in 1874, where he continued his professional development.¹²

As Flanders himself recounted in a 1925 interview, the Minnesota climate did not agree with him. "When the mercury dropped to 15 degrees below zero on Thanksgiving Day, 1875, I thought it time to move."¹³ At the time, Dallas was rumored to be booming, and according to Flanders, his correspondence with the postmaster, Judge A. B. Norton, "pictured the rising town of Dallas in such glowing colors as to cause me to come South as soon as I could arrange my affairs."¹⁴

Flanders arrived in Dallas in August of 1876, and although the town was indeed thriving, there were few prospects for architectural practice. "The outlook for a man of my profession was gloomy in the extreme. The town undoubtedly was doing a rushing business, and men in all lines were prospering, but the buildings were of the cheapest and most temporary kind. Nobody expected to remain here permanently."¹⁵ Dallas was essentially considered a frontier boomtown, destined to flare out in a matter of time, and most residents wanted only to make what money they could while it lasted. Substantial, architect-designed buildings seemed contrary to those plans.

Flanders was able to find work, however. More and more counties were being organized across the state, especially in West Texas, and he was able to secure commissions for a number of courthouses. These included the 1874 Rockwall County Courthouse, the 1882 Nolan County Courthouse (for whom he designed another courthouse in 1888), the Shackelford, Stephens, and Eastland County Courthouses, all built in 1883, and the 1884 Baylor County Courthouse. (Of these, only the Shackelford County Courthouse (NR 1976) remains.) He also designed Dallas' fifth courthouse, constructed in 1885.

Although he continued to design county courthouses, the 1880s and 1890s brought Flanders increasing commercial and residential work in the Dallas area. By then, Dallas residents were apparently convinced that the city would survive in the long-term, and they began to invest in more substantial buildings. Flanders, who has been referred to as "Dallas' First Architect," had little competition at the time, and he designed a number of Dallas' most prominent buildings of the era. He designed the 1885 annex to the Grand Windsor, Dallas' most opulent hotel, the c.1885 Cockrell Building, the 1885 Gould Building, which housed the Texas and Pacific Railroad offices, and the 1884 Gaston Building (also called the Merchants Exchange Building), which Flanders described as "the finest building at the time in town."¹⁶ In 1887, he was also commissioned to design the first State Fair Exposition Building at Fair Park, "the biggest thing of the times in an architectural way."¹⁷

¹² William L. McDonald, *Dallas Rediscovered* (Dallas: Dallas Historical Society, 1978): 35.

¹³ James E. Flanders, as quoted in W. S. Adair, "Dallas' First Architect Had Hard Sledding," *Dallas Morning News*, 15 November 1925, 3:3.

¹⁴ Flanders, as quoted in Adair.

¹⁵ Flanders, as quoted in Adair.

¹⁶ Flanders, as quoted in Adair.

¹⁷ Flanders, as quoted in Adair.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 12

Central Christian Church
Greenville, Hunt County, Texas

While designing these commercial buildings, Flanders was also designing Dallas' most prominent homes, often for the same clients who commissioned his commercial work. He designed houses for Dr. L. W. Locke, Jules E. Schneider, W. H. Flippen, A. H. Belo, John Bookhout, Charles Ott, C. A. Keating and George Atkins. In 1884, Flanders also tried his hand at real estate development, platting the first residential neighborhood west of the Trinity River. He named the development Flanders Heights and constructed his own home there, but the area, near the present intersection of Sylvan and the Dallas-Fort Worth Turnpike, was not in Dallas' line of growth. Flanders Heights was a commercial failure, and the discouraged Flanders left Dallas for California in 1887.¹⁸

He returned to Dallas in 1891, however, and reestablished his architectural practice. He doesn't seem to have lost much ground, and he immediately began receiving more commissions. He continued to design houses, but also a number of Dallas area schools, including the 1891 San Jacinto School at San Jacinto and Pecos, the 1893 Alamo Public School at Jeffries and Hickory, the 1893 Columbian School at Akard and Royal, and the Oak Cliff Public High School at E. 10th and Patton (all since demolished).¹⁹

Flanders also began to focus on another area of his practice, for which he would eventually receive the most acclaim, ecclesiastical design. He claimed to have designed 125 churches in Texas, likely dating back to the 1880s, but, unfortunately, only a handful of examples from the latter part of his career survive today. Those few surviving examples, however, demonstrate his substantive understanding of contemporary trends, progressive architectural tendencies, and unique knack for inventively blending a variety of stylistic elements. Those qualities are manifested in a series of churches, most of which were built in the first decade of the 20th century, that unite Gothic traditions with strong, clear influences of Louis Sullivan and Frank Lloyd Wright's Prairie School.

Architectural Historian Jay C. Henry explains Flanders' blend of Gothic and Modern influences as a compromise between the architect's own progressive tendencies and the more traditional tastes of most church congregations. Henry has also identified an evolutionary process in Flanders' church designs, with gradually stronger allusions to the Chicago School. The 1904 First Methodist Church in Royse City, for instance, was predominately a Carpenter Gothic design, but its wide, flared eaves and simplified detailing indicate a distinct Prairie influence. In subsequent designs, like the 1904 Trinity Methodist Church in Dallas, the 1904-5 First United Methodist Church in Pittsburg and the 1910 St. John's Methodist in Stamford, those references became much more explicit, most notably by incorporating bands of organic, Sullivanesque ornament.²⁰

In specific reference to the First United Methodist Church in Pittsburg, Eileen Wilson Coffman describes an equally significant aspect of the Prairie influence on Flanders' churches, an increasingly horizontal emphasis. With low entry porches that seem more akin to domestic architecture and strong roof lines and string courses, Flanders created a distinct horizontality, complemented by the blocky, rectangular towers that rise from the primary mass. Coffman questions whether Flanders was actually following Wright's development of the Prairie style or simply developing his own style based on many of the same precedents. She notes that elements of Gothic Revival, Shingle, Queen Anne and even Richardsonian can be identified in his church designs, and that Sullivan and the Chicago School were only one of many

¹⁸ McDonald, *Dallas Rediscovered*, 36.

¹⁹ McDonald, *Dallas Rediscovered*, 36.

²⁰ Jay C. Henry, *Architecture in Texas 1895-1945* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1993): 39, 43-44.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 13

Central Christian Church
Greenville, Hunt County, Texas

influences. He was, like his contemporary Wright, a master of eclecticism with a gift for integrating wide-ranging influences to create unique, but harmonious, designs.²¹

As a Chicago native, Flanders could have been more aware of that city's architectural trends than most architects in the South, and most progressive architects of the day were familiar with Wright's Prairie style by the early 1900s. It seems reasonable and even likely, then, that Flanders was influenced by Wright's work. This certainly does not detract from Flanders' designs, however, as he was able to absorb the substance of his many influences, translate them into his own unique style and apply them to a full range of building types. Nowhere is this more apparent than in his churches, which were so idiosyncratic that they are easily identified as his even today.

Flanders returned to California in 1913, where he remained for the rest of his life, and his legacy in Texas ended with his early Modern ecclesiastical masterpieces. We can be sure that Flanders continued to develop as an architect in Hollywood, where he developed a second, more successful "Flanders Heights" neighborhood. He died there in 1928.

Architectural Significance of the Central Christian Church

Greenville's Central Christian Church is a highly significant and remarkably intact example of Flanders' ecclesiastical designs. Constructed in 1899, it is the oldest known surviving example of a Flanders-designed church, and it provides important insight into his architectural development. The building is predominately Late Gothic Revival in style, with its vertical emphasis, intricate detailing and generous amounts of pointed-arch, stained glass windows. The unique patterned brickwork and fish scale shingles also identify the church with more general Late Victorian influences. Yet, Flanders' allusions to Sullivan, through ornamental bands of organic patterns, and Wright, through simple geometric ornament, are already apparent, a notably early incorporation of those elements in Texas.

Those varied and disparate influences were united seamlessly in the Central Christian Church to create an intriguing and wholly original design. Flanders' attention to detail and workmanship is also evident, with each element carefully designed and crafted to complement the whole. His variation on an Akron plan indicates that he was also aware of contemporary architectural trends that related specifically to Protestant churches. In short, the Central Christian Church represents the work of a master architect, possesses high artistic values and embodies distinctive characteristics of its type and period. Although the Central Christian Church is a religious property it derives its primary significance from its architectural distinction, and therefore meets criteria consideration A. For all of these reasons, it is nominated to the National Register under Criterion C in the area of Architecture at the local level of significance.

²¹ Eileen Wilson Coffman, "James E. Flanders' First United Methodist Church, Pittsburg, Texas," *Perspectives* 13:1 (1984): 15.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 9 Page 14

Central Christian Church
Greenville, Hunt County, Texas

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10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF PROPERTY: less than one acre

UTM REFERENCES	<u>Zone</u>	<u>Easting</u>	<u>Northing</u>
1.	14	769751	3670188

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION All that certain lot, tract or parcel of land situated in Greenville, Hunt County, Texas, being Lot 8 Block 7 Section 5, Hilltop Addition to the City of Greenville, according to plat of said addition recorded in Vol. 400 Page 188 Deed records of Hunt County.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION The nomination includes all property historically associated with the building.

11. FORM PREPARED BY (with assistance from Peter Ketter, THC Historian)

NAME/TITLE: William R. Schwene, Trustee

ORGANIZATION: Central Christian Church

DATE: 24 March 2003

STREET & NUMBER: 2863 Hwy. 380

TELEPHONE: 903/455-8709

CITY OR TOWN: Greenville

STATE: Texas

ZIP CODE: 75401

ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION

CONTINUATION SHEETS

MAPS

PHOTOGRAPHS (see continuation sheet Photo-18)

ADDITIONAL ITEMS (see continuation sheets Figure-15 through Figure-17)

PROPERTY OWNER

NAME: Central Christian Church

STREET & NUMBER: 2611 Wesley Street

TELEPHONE: 903/455-1373

CITY OR TOWN: Greenville

STATE: Texas

ZIP CODE: 75401

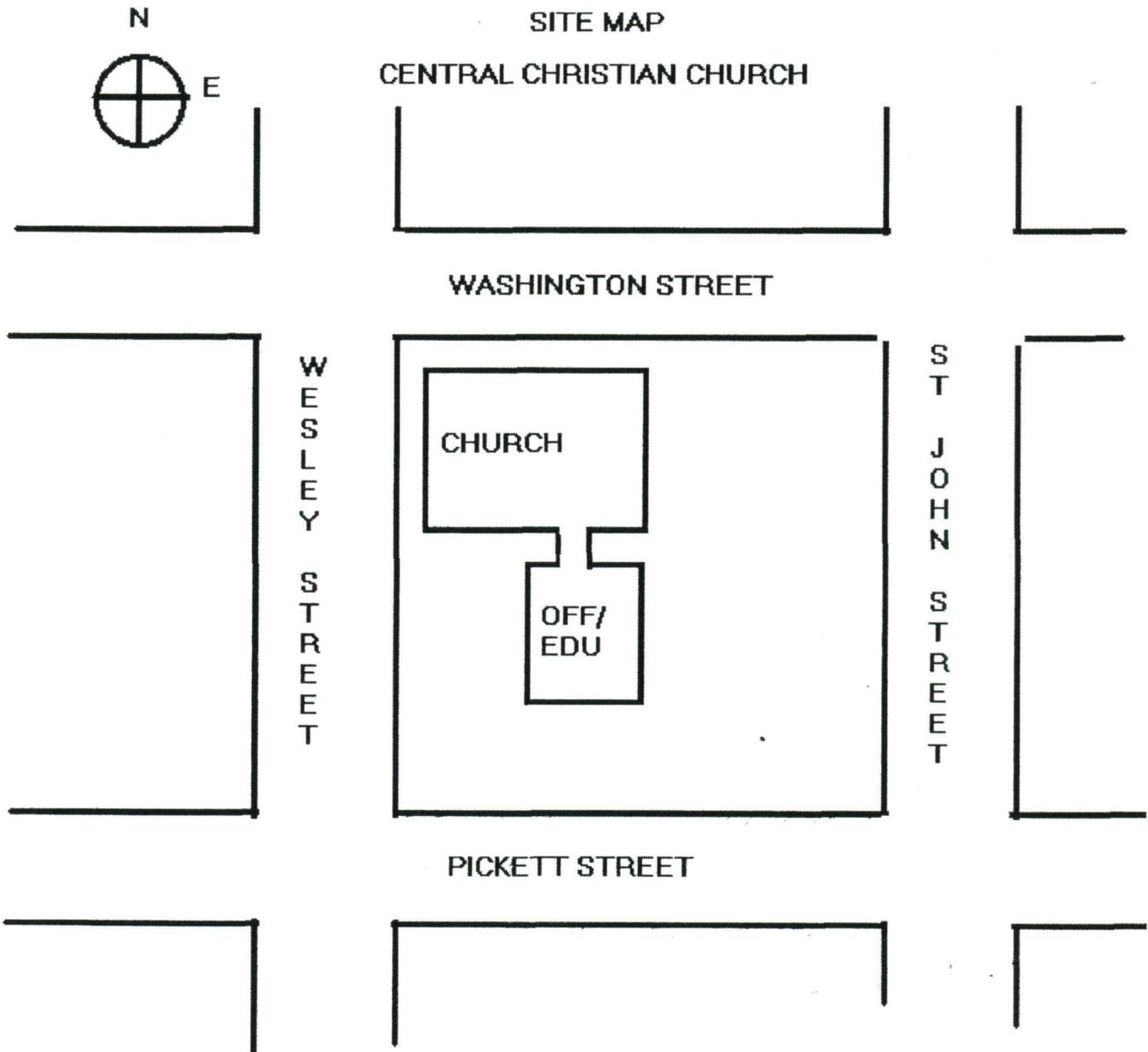
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National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Figure Page 15

Central Christian Church
Greenville, Hunt County, Texas

Site Plan (not to scale)
Prepared by author



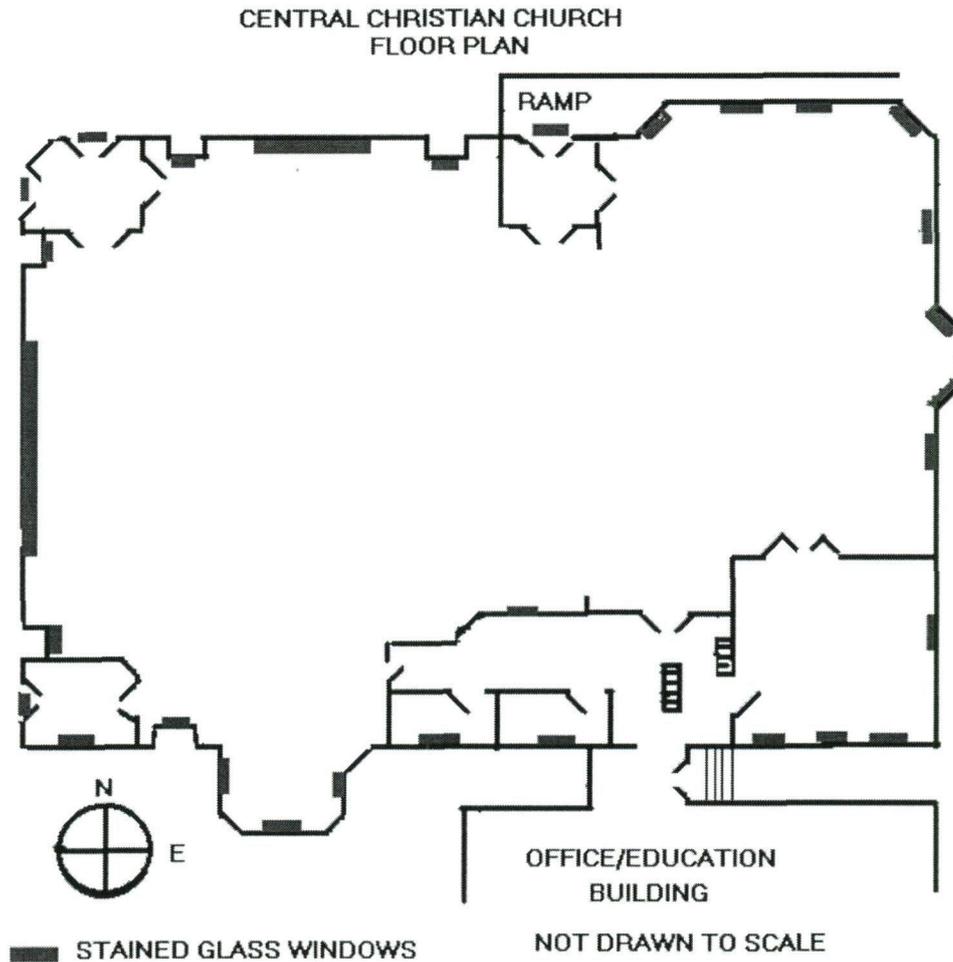
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National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Figure Page 16

Central Christian Church
Greenville, Hunt County, Texas

First Floor Plan
Prepared by author



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National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Figure Page 17

Central Christian Church
Greenville, Hunt County, Texas

Historic Photo, c.1905



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Photo Page 18

Central Christian Church
Greenville, Hunt County, Texas

Photo Log

Central Christian Church
2611 Wesley Street
Greenville, Hunt County, Texas
Photographed by William Schwene
March 2003
Negatives on file with the Texas Historical Commission

Photo 1 of 2
North west oblique, camera facing southeast

Photo 2 of 2
Annex West façade, camera facing east

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY Central Christian Church
NAME:

MULTIPLE
NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: TEXAS, Hunt

DATE RECEIVED: 11/28/03 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 12/16/03
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 1/01/04 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 1/11/04
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 03001376

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N
OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N
REQUEST: N SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: N NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT RETURN REJECT 1.6.04 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

Entered in the
National Register

RECOM./CRITERIA _____

REVIEWER _____ DISCIPLINE _____

TELEPHONE _____ DATE _____

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N



Photo 1 of 2
Central Christian Church
2611 Wesley Street
Greenville, Hunt Co., Texas

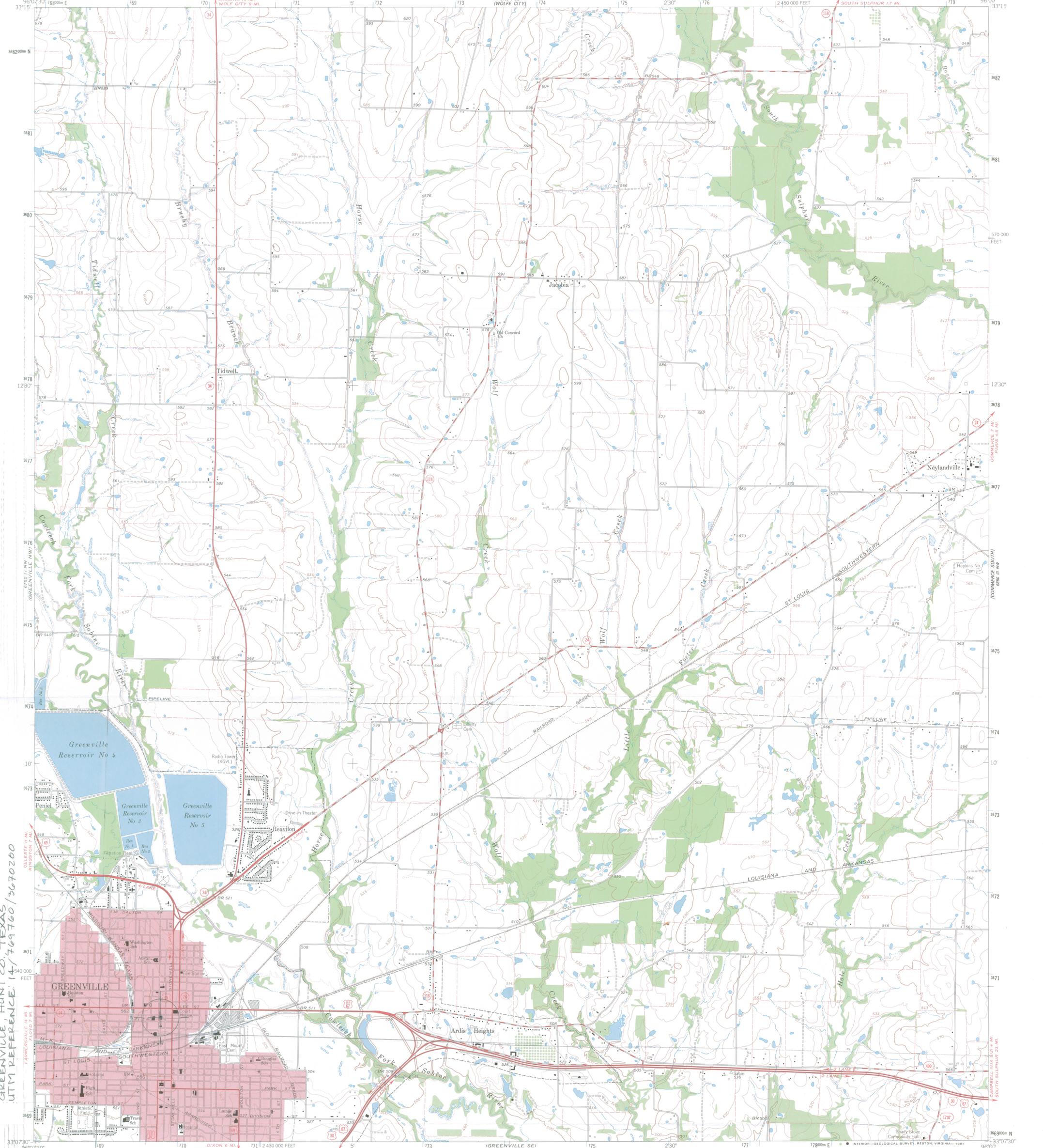


Photo 2 of 2

Central Christian Church

2611 Wesley Street

Greenville, Hunt Co., Texas



CENTRAL CHRISTIAN CHURCH
2611 WESLEY STREET
GREENVILLE, HUNT CO., TEXAS
UTM REFERENCE: 14T 769 760 / 3670200

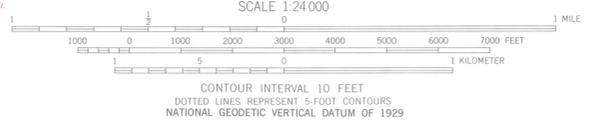
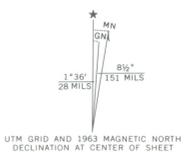
Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey
Control by USGS and USCGS

Topography by photogrammetric methods from aerial photographs taken 1961. Field checked 1963

Polyconic projection. 1927 North American datum
10,000-foot grid based on Texas coordinate system, north central zone
1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks, zone 14, shown in blue

Red tint indicates area in which only landmark buildings are shown
Fine red dashed lines indicate selected fence lines

To place on the predicted North American Datum 1983
move the projection lines 10 meters south and
24 meters east as shown by dashed corner ticks



ROAD CLASSIFICATION

Heavy-duty	Light-duty
Medium-duty	Unimproved dirt
Interstate Route	U.S. Route
	State Route

GREENVILLE NE, TEX.
N3307.5 - W9600/7.5

3396-114

1963
DMA 6750 II NE-SERIES V882

THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS
FOR SALE BY U. S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, DENVER, COLORADO 80225, OR RESTON, VIRGINIA 22092
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST