

FIRST FINANCIAL BANCORP /OH/

Form 8-K

October 20, 2003

SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE COMMISSION  
Washington, D.C. 20549

FORM 8-K

CURRENT REPORT  
PURSUANT TO SECTION 13 OR 15(d) OF THE  
SECURITIES EXCHANGE ACT OF 1934

Date of Report: October 20, 2003

**FIRST FINANCIAL BANCORP.**

(Exact name of registrant as specified in its charter)

Ohio

0-12379

31-1042001

(State or other jurisdiction  
of incorporation)

(Commission File Number)

(IRS Employer  
Identification No.)

300 High Street  
Hamilton, Ohio

45011

(Address of principal executive offices)

(Zip Code)

Registrant's telephone number, including area code: (513) 867-5240

Form 8-K

First Financial Bancorp.

**Item 7. Exhibits.**

(a) Exhibit:

99.1 First Financial Bancorp. Press Release dated October 20, 2003.

**Item 9. Regulation FD Disclosure.**

On October 20, 2003, First Financial Bancorp. issued its earnings press release that included the results of operations and financial condition for the third quarter of 2003. A copy of the earnings press release is attached as Exhibit 99.1.

**Item 12. Disclosure of Results of Operation and Financial Condition.**

The earnings press release includes two non-GAAP financial measures. The first non-GAAP financial measure appears in the first paragraph under the heading Net Interest Income. The second appears in the table entitled Additional Data Fully Tax Equivalent Net Interest Income. The tax equivalent adjustment to net interest income recognizes the income tax savings when comparing taxable and tax-exempt assets and assumes a 35% tax rate. Management believes that it is a standard practice in the banking industry to present net interest margin and net interest income on a fully tax equivalent basis. Therefore, management believes, these measures provide useful information to investors by allowing them to make peer comparisons. Management also uses these measures to make peer comparisons.

Below is a table showing net interest income calculated and presented in accordance with GAAP and the adjustments made to arrive at the non-GAAP financial measure net interest income tax equivalent. The table also shows net interest margin calculated and presented in accordance with GAAP and the method used to arrive at the non-GAAP financial measure net interest margin (fully tax equivalent).

|                                    | Three months ended, |                  |                  |                  |                  |
|------------------------------------|---------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
|                                    | Sep. 30,<br>2003    | Jun. 30,<br>2003 | Mar. 31,<br>2002 | Dec. 31,<br>2002 | Sep. 30,<br>2002 |
| Net interest income                | \$36,373            | \$37,179         | \$37,236         | \$39,447         | \$40,583         |
| Tax equivalent adjustment          |                     |                  |                  |                  |                  |
| 900 918 938 984 1,017              |                     |                  |                  |                  |                  |
| <hr/>                              |                     |                  |                  |                  |                  |
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| Net interest income tax equivalent | \$37,273            | \$38,097         | \$38,174         | \$40,431         | \$41,600         |
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Average earning assets

3,623,792 3,572,557 3,457,340 3,401,949 3,427,335

Net interest margin\*

3.98% 4.17% 4.37% 4.60% 4.70%

Net interest margin (fully tax equivalent)\*

4.08% 4.28% 4.48% 4.72% 4.82%

Margins are calculated using net interest income annualized divided by average earning assets.

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**SIGNATURES**

Pursuant to the requirements of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934, the registrant has duly caused this report to be signed on its behalf by the undersigned hereunto duly authorized.

**FIRST FINANCIAL BANCORP.**

By: /s/ C. Douglas Lefferson

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C. Douglas Lefferson  
Senior Vice President and  
Chief Financial Officer

Date: October 20, 2003

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Form 8-K

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**Exhibit Index**

| <u>Exhibit No.</u> | <u>Description</u>   |
|--------------------|--|
| 99.1               | First Financial Bancorp. Press Release dated October 20, 2003. |