

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY
RECEIVED
DATE ENTERED

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC Sharon Lutheran Church and Cemetery

AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

E side of State Route 42; SW of intersection of State Routes 42 and 625.

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Ceres

VICINITY OF

Ninth (William C. Wampler)

STATE

Virginia

CODE

51

COUNTY

Bland

CODE

021

3 CLASSIFICATION

| CATEGORY | OWNERSHIP | STATUS | PRESENT USE |
|---|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT | <input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED | <input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S) | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE | <input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED | <input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE | <input type="checkbox"/> BOTH | <input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS | <input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL |
| <input type="checkbox"/> SITE | PUBLIC ACQUISITION | ACCESSIBLE | <input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL |
| <input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT | <input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS | <input type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED | <input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED | <input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> NO | <input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL |
| | | | <input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY |
| | | | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER cemetery |

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME Virginia Synod, Lutheran Church in America c/o The Reverend George Handley

STREET & NUMBER 317 Washington Avenue, SW

CITY, TOWN

Roanoke

VICINITY OF

STATE

Virginia 24016

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Bland County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Bland

STATE

Virginia

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission Survey

DATE

1973, 1978

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS

Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission, 221 Governor Street

CITY, TOWN

Richmond

STATE

Virginia 23219

7 DESCRIPTION

| CONDITION | | CHECK ONE | CHECK ONE |
|--|---------------------------------------|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT | <input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD | <input type="checkbox"/> RUINS | <input type="checkbox"/> ALTERED | <input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> FAIR | <input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED | | |

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Sharon Lutheran Church and Cemetery are situated on the edge of the tiny village of Ceres. Like most of the German cemeteries of Southwest Virginia, Sharon Cemetery is set on a knoll amidst rolling farmlands. The present frame church probably dates from 1883, when it was built as a union church for the Presbyterians and Lutherans of Ceres. This church is four bays long, with round-arched, stained-glass windows; a square tower with a bell-cast pyramidal roof and cross finial projects from the center of the gable-end entrance facade. The exterior of Sharon Church has been covered with aluminum siding, but the interior remains as it was built. Golden-oak, Gothic-style pews are set in an arc, facing the oak Eastlake-style rail and the shallow chancel. A gold-painted, Eastlake-style chandelier and an apparently locally made mid-19th-century table are among the other furnishings of interest.

Of principal interest, however, is the cemetery, which contains a significant collection of rare Germanic gravestones which are stylistically related to those found in the outlying churches of the Wythe County German settlements. Specifically, the stones here suggest that they were made by the same hand or hands that produced those at Zion and Kimberling churches in Wythe County and Central Church, Burke's Garden, in Tazewell County. There are approximately 50 to 60 of these stones, in various states of preservation, and they comprise 15 to 25 percent of the total stones in the cemetery. These stones display characteristic features of traditional German stone carving in the area--they are very thick sandstone slabs, are decorated on both sides and often on their edges, and are often fancifully shaped, with multiple-lobed tops. Their inscriptions are normally framed with heavy raised moldings, and standard decorative motifs include six- and eight-petaled flowers, hearts, vines, and abstract geometrical shapes. The most striking and one of the best-preserved monuments in the cemetery is the HG stone. This tall slab, like most others in the cemetery, was so lightly inscribed that its legend has weathered away. In contrast, however, the decoration on the marker is strongly molded and has weathered well. The body of the HG stone is rectangular, as most are, while the central top element is shaped like the top half of a heart and bordered by a strong roll molding. On the front, this upper lobe contains the initials HG, probably for Groseclose, a family name prominently represented in the cemetery. A bold rectangular border encloses the panel where the inscription was, and its stiles are carried down to grade. Beneath the bottom rails of the panel is a scalloped device which, like similar devices used in 17th- and 18th-century New England designs, is probably intended to represent a pall. Some variation of this motif was commonly used on many of the Wythe County groups of stones. Beneath the pall is a large, plain heart. The reverse of the stone is occupied by a central vertical vine with a round, almost invisible, flower at the top.

There are several late 19th- and early 20th-century stones of interest, including a pair with unattached conch shells set on top and another, marking the grave of E. M. Groseclose (d. 1915), depicting the gates of heaven.

DU/MTP

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION:

The register boundaries on the west, south, and east follow those for the church and cemetery shown on the U.S.G.S. Garden Mountain 7.5' quadrangle. On the north, the boundaries follow State Route 42.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

| PERIOD | | AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW | | | | |
|---|--|--|---|---|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC | <input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC | <input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING | <input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> RELIGION | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499 | <input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC | <input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION | <input type="checkbox"/> LAW | <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599 | <input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE | <input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS | <input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699 | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE | <input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION | <input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799 | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ART | <input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING | <input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC | <input type="checkbox"/> THEATER | | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899 | <input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT | <input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY | <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION | | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900- | <input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS | <input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY | <input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT | <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY) | | |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION | | | | |

SPECIFIC DATES cemetery: 1817-1978
 church: 1883

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Sharon Lutheran Church and Cemetery descend from the large-scale German settlement of Wythe County and more specifically from a union church established here in 1821. The cemetery is one of a handful of sites in Southwest Virginia where significant numbers of Germanic gravestones are preserved. The gravestones are especially important documents of the rich material folk culture of these settlers, because, unlike domestic examples, they are visible to the public. The present church structure dates from 1883 and retains a handsome, little-altered, country-Gothic interior in the Eastlake manner.

Germans first came to Wythe County in the late 18th century, settling at Wytheville and fanning out to the south and west of there. St. John's in Wytheville was their principal church, but soon smaller churches were set up in the outlying areas, including Zion (Crippled Creek) and Kimberling churches in Wythe County and Sharon Church. As in the case of Sharon Church, for which land was given by Jacob Groseclose, a Presbyterian, and Jacob Kimberling, a Lutheran, in 1817, often the tiny Lutheran congregations shared their buildings with German Reformed groups or even with non-German denominational groups like the Presbyterians and Methodists. At Sharon, this arrangement continued for the rest of the 19th century. When the log church of 1821 was replaced by a brick church in 1856, it was still used both by the Lutherans and by the New School Presbyterians. Again, in 1883, when the present structure was erected, the building remained a union church. It was only in 1911 that the Presbyterians built their own structure.

For the Lutherans, early pastors were George D. Flohr (d. 1826) of St. John's Church in Wytheville and Nehemiah Bonham, who also served the Burke's Garden congregation. It is not surprising, therefore, that the stylistic ties among the gravestones of the three counties should be so close, given their identity of personnel. Sharon Lutherans were charter members of the Synod of Southwest Virginia, while her Presbyterians were organized in 1827 under the Abingdon Presbytery.

DU/MTP

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Bland County Centennial Corporation. History of Bland County, Virginia. Radford, Va., 1961.
 Cassell, C. W.; Finch, W. J.; and Henkel, E. O., eds. History of the Lutheran Church in Virginia and East Tennessee. Strasburg, Va., 1930.
 Wust, Klaus. Folk Art in Stone. Edinburg, Va., 1970.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 4 acres

QUADRANGLE NAME Garden Mountain, Va.

QUADRANGLE SCALE 1:24000

UTM REFERENCES

A 17 468900 4096520
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

B
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

C

D

E

F

G

H

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION Beginning at a point on NE side of private drive and S side of State Route 42, 2000' WSW of intersection of State Routes 625 and 42; thence following NE side of said drive, first NE, then SE, then S to SE boundary of cemetery; thence following said cemetery boundary approximately 500' SW; thence following SW cemetery boundary for about 200'

and continuing in a NW direction to S side of Route 42; thence extending along said side of said route NE for about 400' to point of origin.

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

| STATE | CODE | COUNTY | CODE |
|-------|------|--------|------|
| | | | |
| | | | |

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission Staff

ORGANIZATION Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission DATE November 1978

STREET & NUMBER 221 Governor Street TELEPHONE (804) 786-3144

CITY OR TOWN Richmond STATE Virginia 23219

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL STATE X LOCAL

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

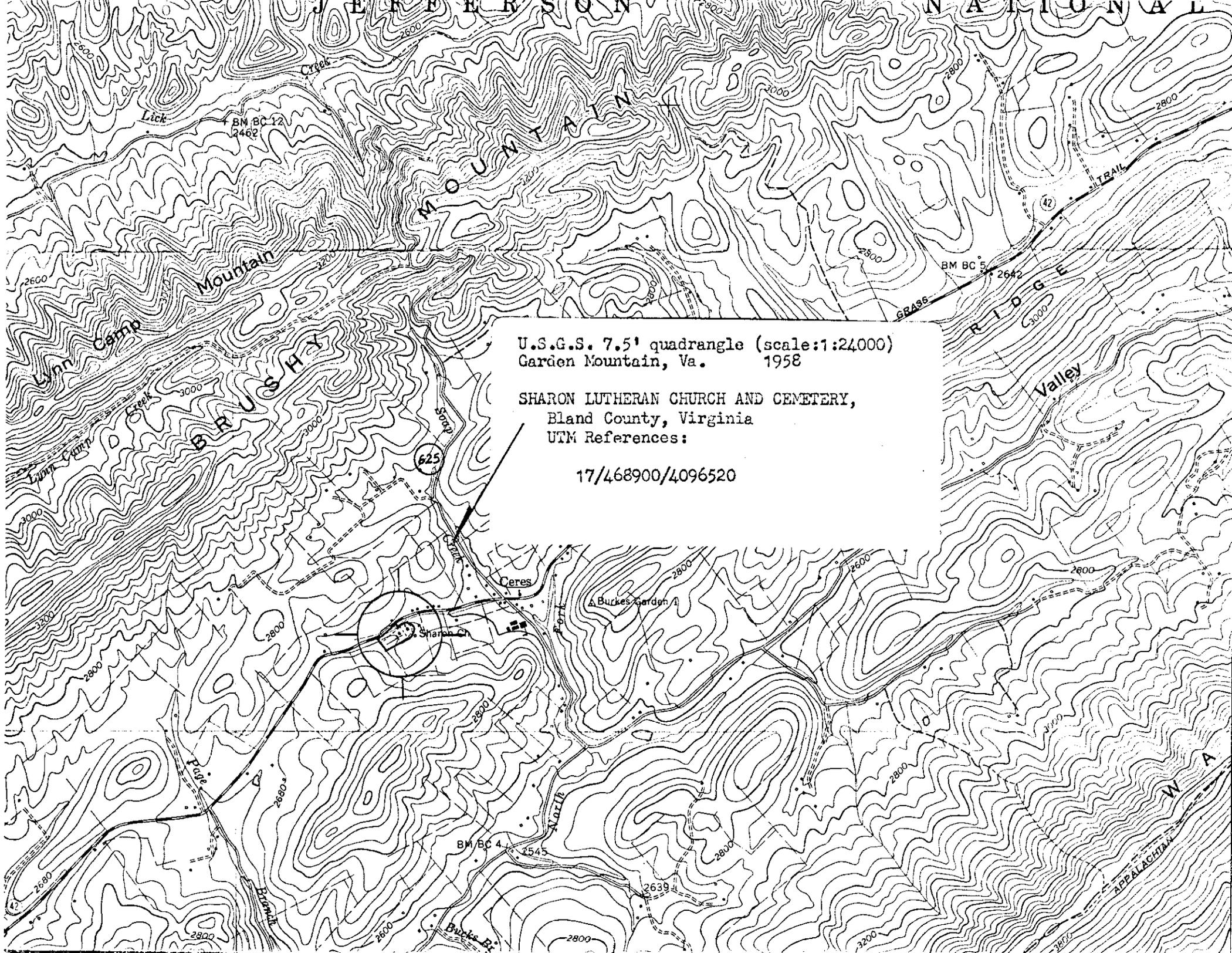
TITLE Tucker Hill, Executive Director
Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission

DATE NOV 21 1978

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

| | |
|---------------------------------|------|
| KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER | DATE |
| ATTEST: CHIEF OF REGISTRATION | DATE |



U.S.G.S. 7.5' quadrangle (scale:1:24000)
Garden Mountain, Va. 1958

SHARON LUTHERAN CHURCH AND CEMETERY,
Bland County, Virginia
UTM References:

17/468900/4096520