

VLR-4/18/89 NRHP-12/19/90

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 Christ Episcopal Church
other names/site number Christ Church, Big Stone Gap DHR 101-5

2. Location

street & number 100 Clinton Avenue
city, town Big Stone Gap
state Virginia code VA county Wise code 195 zip code 24219

3. Classification

Ownership of Property: private, public-local, public-hate, public-federal
Category of Property: building(s), district, site, structure, object
Number of Resources within Property: Contributing (1), Noncontributing (0 buildings, 0 sites, 0 structures, 0 objects)
Total: 1
Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: 0

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.
Signature of certifying official: Hugh C. Miller, State Historic Preservation Officer
Date:
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.
determined eligible for the National Register.
determined not eligible for the National Register.
removed from the National Register.
other, (explain):

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)
RELIGION: Religious Structure

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)
RELIGION: Religious Structure

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(enter categories from instructions)

LATE VICTORIAN: Gothic

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation BRICK

walls WOOD: Weatherboard

roof ASPHALT

other

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

SUMMARY

Christ Church, Big Stone Gap, is located in the residential section of the industrial boomtown of Big Stone Gap. The cross-shaped frame church is covered with weatherboard and roofed with asphalt shingles. It features rectangular, colored glass windows and a well preserved interior with gothic arches, tongue-and-groove sheathing, and ornamental pew-ends. Additions were made at the east end, including an enlarged chancel and rooms in the angles of the transepts, in the early twentieth century, and a large brick parish hall added nearby in the mid-twentieth century.

ARCHITECTURAL ANALYSIS

Christ Church was built in 1892 on the northeast corner of Clinton Avenue and East First Street in the residential section of Big Stone Gap. The church building stands back thirty feet from the Clinton Avenue sidewalk and ten feet from the sidewalk along First Street, and is surrounded by landscaped grounds. To the rear a modern one-story brick parish hallway was added in the mid-twentieth century, largely concealed by the bulk of the red-painted frame church. The cruciform church is covered by a hipped roof, and an added projecting gabled vestibule shelters the entry in the northwest end. A hip-roofed belfry crowns the roof at the northwest end. The shingle-covered belfry has four arched openings and contains a bell.

The exterior detailing includes a brick foundation, beaded cornerboards, a vertical tongue-and-groove frieze, a molded wooden watertable, narrow weatherboards, an extended roof at the west end supported by chamfered brackets. Originally the door at the northwest end was sheltered under the extended shed roof, but in 1942 the door was enclosed in a new gable-roofed vestibule or narthex reached by a flight of concrete steps. The original doors which incorporate diagonal boards in their upper panels, were moved to the entry to the new narthex. Brick flues, which originally served a pair of stoves heating the church interior, rise in the west angles of the transepts. The flues have been capped off below the roofline. All of the double-hung sash windows are single except a pair of windows in each side of the center bay of the

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curve.

The church was extended to the southeast in the twentieth century creating an enlarged sanctuary and rooms with shallow hipped roofs added on either side, containing a choir room (north) and a sacristy (south). The fenestration and weatherboarding matches that of the original building. A new cellar excavated under the new sanctuary contains a furnace vented through a chimney on the south side of the sanctuary.

On the interior the dark-stained varnished woodwork creates a dim and appropriately mysterious quality. The side walls of the twenty-one foot wide nave are broken up into three structured bays by ornamental wooden arches and decorative piers bearing half-round applied colonettes supporting the arches. The arches follow the shape of the truncated ceiling and are pierced by beveled holes. Wooden half-round molding covers the joints between the four sections of each arch. The third and southeasternmost bay of each nave wall opens through a similar arch to a small (ten by thirteen feet) transept. Another arch at the southeast end frames the original chancel, which occupied a fourth bay of seven feet in length.

The walls and ceiling are sheathed with wide beaded tongue-and-groove boards. The walls incorporate vertical board wainscoting and diagonally placed boards above. The door and window trim consists of molded boards with bull's-eye cornerblocks. There is a needed and molded cornice around the interior. Patches in the chancel side walls indicate openings now removed. The patches indicate that there may have been a small open area behind the column on the south side of the chancel arch, perhaps a small projecting element in the south angle of the southwest transept. A patch on the north side shows the former location of a door in the northeast wall of the original transept, possibly leading to a small sacristy in a similar position on the northeast side or directly to the exterior. The church is filled with wooden pews with decorative ends and the floor is gently raked downward from the northwest end to the crossing aisle.

The added sanctuary is separated from the choir, which occupies the area of the entire original chancel, and together with the choir forms the present chancel. The sanctuary is a small (ten feet deep by thirteen feet wide) space separated from the choir by an arch similar to the others in the church and by a simple wooden alter-rail. The choir, which is raised up two steps from the body of the church, is a step below the sanctuary. The walls of the sanctuary are sheathed with beaded tongue-and-groove boards in a similar configuration to that of the body of the church, but the cornice and chair rail are subtly different. A square-headed stained glass window incorporating an arched design is located in the center of the southeast wall, above a Gothic wooden altar with three pointed arches across the front supported by

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Gothic colonettes. The wooden chancel furniture is simple and incorporates square panels. Lighting fixtures throughout the church are metal and of a Gothic lantern design. Several ceiling fans have been added in recent years.

The building as it stands has been sensitively altered and continues to present an appearance close to that of its original form on the tree-shaded corner lot. A mid-twentieth century semi-detached wing to the northeast contains classrooms and offices. The one-story gable-roofed brick building has a very low profile and does not detract from the church, to which it is connected only by a breezeway at the rear.

8. Statement of Significance

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

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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)

Period of Significance

Significant Dates

Architecture

1892-1917

1892,

1915-1917

1942

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

T. Buckler Ghequiere (architect)

C.E. and C.H. Spaulding (contractors)

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

SUMMARY

Christ Church, Big Stone Gap, is significant under criterion C as an excellent example of a late Victorian religious building in a newly laid-out industrial boom town in the Appalachian coalfields. Churches with similar histories include St. Mary's Episcopal Church in Middlesboro, Kentucky, Historic District (list in the National Register) and the now-ruined stone Christ Episcopal Church in the Pulaski, Virginia, Historic District (listed in the National Register). The stylishness of these churches and their contrast with the simple early churches of other denominations are indicative of the use of architectural design by the wealthy landowners resident industrialists (many of whom were Episcopalians) to express their piety and their prominence in the community, not only in their grand homes in the surrounding neighborhood, but in their church, built when Big Stone Gap was in its first phase of development. The church was built just before the Depression which slowed growth throughout the region in the mid-1890's.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Christ Church was organized in 1890, after Baptist, Presbyterian and Methodist congregations had begun developing. The Reverends Lloyd (of Abingdon) and Funston held services for a group of about twenty Episcopalians in the Baptist Church in late 1890 (Big Stone Gap Post, October 31, 1890). By August of the following year a rector was in place, The Reverend Robert S. Carter, and Sunday services were held each week. He apparently contracted almost immediately with the architect "T. Buckler Chequior of Baltimore", because by November he was reported to have received plans from that designer for a "simple and inexpensive...architecturally beautiful" building of forty-four by forty feet. The interior was described as being finished in wood "...the ceiling being arched. Within are the usual stall, chancel, gate, railing, altar, table, choir seats, [and] vestry room besides the

See continuation sheet

9. Major Bibliographical References

- Big Stone Gap Post, issues from 1890-1892.
- Typescript. "History of Church Episcopal Church" in collection of Christ Episcopal Church, no **date**, no author.
- Wells, John, **Virginia Division of Historic Landmarks**, Personal communication, February 1989.

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:

Virginia Division of Historic Landmarks

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property _____

UTM References

A
 Zone Easting Northing

C

B
 Zone Easting Northing

D

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

Beginning at point A on the northeast corner of Clinton Avenue and East First Street in Big Stone Gap, proceeding north 105 feet with the east side of Clinton Avenue to point B, thence east 130 feet to point C, thence 105 feet south to point D, thence 130 feet west with the north side of East First Street to the point of origin.

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Boundary Justification

The boundaries were selected to enclose the nominated property. The boundaries correspond to the original lot lines and enclose the church building and its immediate site.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Gibson Worsham, Principal
 organization Gibson Worsham, Architect date February 28, 1989
 street & number Yellow Sulphur springs, Route 2 telephone (703) 552-4730
 city or town Christiansburg state Virginia zip code 24073

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audience room." The shingles of the roof were to be stained a light green, the walls and belfry painted a dark straw color, the window and door trim brownish red, and the window sash and doors a dark red. Contributions were being sought. (Big Stone Gap Post, November 13, 1891). As designed and built the church reflects popular ecclesiastical concepts as depicted in the mid- to late nineteenth-century publications, with a Queen Anne influence modifying the Gothic forms popularized by Richard Upjohn and others in preceding decades. T. Buckler Ghequiere (also Chequior or Ghequier) was active as an architect in Baltimore, Maryland from about 1877 to 1909. Known projects in Virginia are the remodeling of the Richmond County Courthouse in 1877 and the new St. Stephen's Episcopal Church in Heatheville. St. Stephens Church, a fine example of a Gothic church, may have been known to the rector and may account for Ghequiere's receiving the commission.

In January of 1892 Carter announced that he had received a good response in subscriptions toward the building of "his chapel" that he thought he would begin work very soon, with completion by Easter of that year. (Post, January 8, 1892). A contract for \$2,300 was signed with C.E. and C.H. Spaulding in early February, and work was to begin on the first of March (Post, February 19, 1892). The walls were completed and the roof in progress by late April. (Post, April 22, 1892) and on May 7 Bishop Randolph returned to dedicate the apparently completed structure with a service of consecration and confirmation (Post, May 11, 1892).

According to church members there was not enough money left to paint the church and Mr. J.K. Toggart, a member, volunteered a quantity of red paint leftover after painting his barn. His family continues to provide red paint for the church to the day, accounting for the failure to follow what were apparently the architect's directions for color mentioned above. (Typescript, "Christ Episcopal Church History") Few changes were made to the building until 1915 when a choir room was added to the northeast side of the chancel, and two years later a sacristy was added on the opposite side. Leaded, stained glass windows were added in 1925 and 1926. The window over the altar was dedicated to the Rev. Robert Carter.

As part of a general liturgically-based redesign of the interior in the mid-twentieth century, the sanctuary was enlarged and the choir area rearranged. The pulpit and altar rail date from that period. At the same time, during the rectorship of the Rev. George Talcott Welsch, the narthex or porch was added to shelter the northwest door. At the same point in the mid-twentieth century, the original wood shingle roof was replaced with asphalt shingles. A parish hall was added in recent

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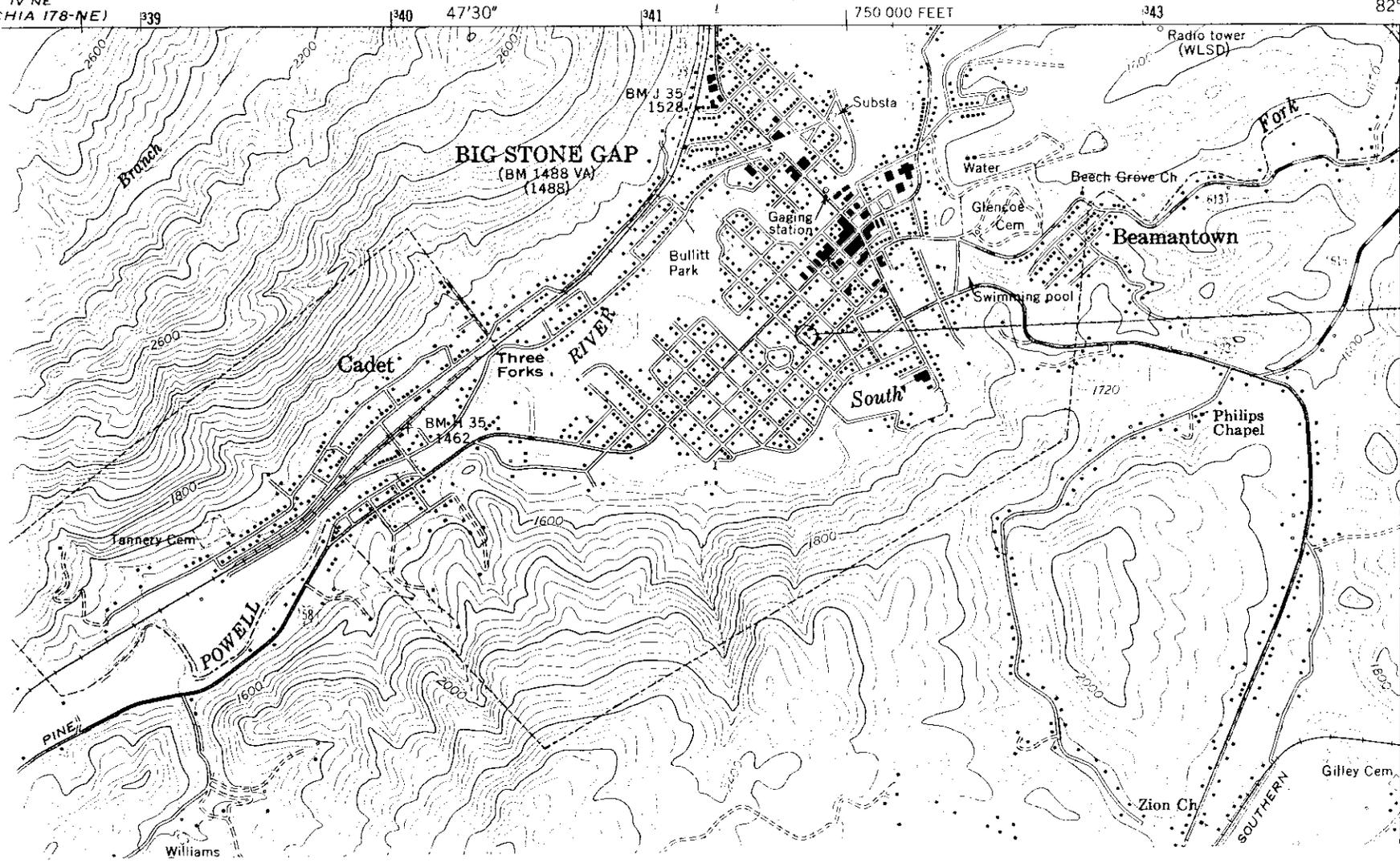
decades to the rear of the church. ("History of Christ Episcopal Church"). The congregation continues to carefully maintain the building of 1892, extending and enlarging it without seriously impairing the design considerations of its Baltimore-based architect.

STATES
LEY AUTHORITY

BIG STONE GAP QUADRANGLE
VIRGINIA
7.5 MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC) 178-SE

44571 NW
(NORTON 187-NW)

VICES BRANCH
IV NE
HIA 178-NE) 339



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