

VLR-6/20/89 NRHP-11/13/89

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 Big Spring Baptist Church

other names/site number First Baptist Church: 60-435

2. Location

street & number North side VA Rt. 631, 1/10 mi. east U.S. 460/11 N/A not for publication

city, town Elliston N/A vicinity

state Virginia code VA county Montgomery code 121 zip code 24087

3. Classification

Ownership of Property

- private (checked)
public-local
public-State
public-Federal

Category of Property

- building(s)
district
site
structure
object

Number of Resources within Property

Table with 2 columns: Contributing, Noncontributing. Rows for buildings, sites, structures, objects, Total.

Name of related multiple property listing: Prehistoric and Historic Resources of Montgomery County

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

Date

Director, Virginia Department of Historic Resources

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

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. 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:)

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

RELIGION: religious structure

FUNERARY: cemetery

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

RELIGION: religious structure

FUNERARY: cemetery

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

OTHER: nave plan

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation STONE: limestone

walls METAL: ALUMINUM

roof METAL: tin

other

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Big Spring Baptist Church is situated on an open site on a hill above the town of Elliston. The nave-plan frame structure features a high gable roof, a central three-stage tower on the south (principal) front, and a gabled projecting baptistry on the north front. The four-bay nave plan features pointed-arch windows and doors. The projecting central tower contains a vestibule entered by a double door and reached by a flight of concrete steps. Small additions have been made, one to the west of the central tower on the front, and one to the west of the baptistry on the rear. A brick flue rises on the east side in the center of the wall. The tower incorporates small paired arched windows below gabled, louvered dormers.

On the interior a raised dais at the north end carries an elaborate Eastlake-style pulpit and Gothic altar furniture. Behind the pulpit is an arched opening containing the baptistry, lit by a circular stained-glass window depicting St. John the Baptist baptizing Christ. A raised choir is located to the west of the pulpit platform. The basement features coursed rubble walls with vents in the side and a door to the east of the tower on the south front. An unfenced cemetery is located on the hilltop to the north of the church. The cemetery, where the deceased members of most of the area's black families are buried, is very carefully maintained. It contains grave markers of conventional form and materials dating from the late nineteenth century to the present. A noncontributing concrete block outhouse is located to the north of the church.

8. Statement of Significance

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

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)

ARCHITECTURE:

ETHNIC HERITAGE: black

Period of Significance

ca. 1880

Significant Dates

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Pepper, Joseph, builder

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

The Big Spring Baptist Church is significant under criteria A and C as an important landmark in the black community and an unusually architecturally developed example of the regionally popular nave-plan form. Alterations to the building, including the application of aluminum siding, have not detracted from the building's significant form and history. This building, the first black church in Elliston, was organized with the support of Captain Charles Schaeffer of the Christiansburg Institute (Claxton). The congregation later changed its name to First Baptist Church. Captain Schaeffer was a northern Quaker educator who came to the Christiansburg area to found a school for the education of the freed slaves during the post-Civil War years. He was the founder of several Baptist churches for black congregations in the county including Schaeffer Memorial Baptist Church in Christiansburg (listed in the National Register as part of the Christiansburg Institute in 1978). A portrait of Captain Schaeffer hangs to the west of the baptistry in the sanctuary of the Big Spring Baptist Church.

The Big Spring Baptist Church, in utilizing the nave plan, takes part in the regional tradition of church architecture. The building's tower and arched windows place it in a small group of rural nave-plan churches, including Trinity Methodist Church(60-383) and Graysontown Methodist Church(60-109), which display more substantial Gothic Revival features. These churches depart from the plain box-like form most typical of rural churches in the region. Of the thirteen churches identified from the period, Big Spring Baptist Church is one of the largest and most sophisticated in design. It is also the most substantial black church in the county, other than Christiansburg's Schaeffer Memorial Baptist Church, and demonstrates Captain Schaeffer's, Elliston builder Joseph Pepper's, and the local black community's high standards and goals.

See continuation sheet

9. Major Bibliographical References

Claxton, Mrs. Hattie. Interview, November 1985.

Ellis, Mrs. Northcross. Interview, September 1985.

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 # _____

See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository:

Virginia Department of Historic Resources
221 Governor Street
Richmond, Virginia 23219

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property four acres

UTM References

A 17 5681760 4118140
 Zone Easting Northing

C _____

B _____
 Zone Easting Northing

D _____

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

Beginning at point A 100 feet northwest and 245 feet southwest of the southwest corner of the church proceeding 927.5 feet to point B, thence east 217.5 feet to point C, thence south 927.5 feet to point D, thence west 217.5 feet along the north side of the road to point of origin.

See continuation sheet

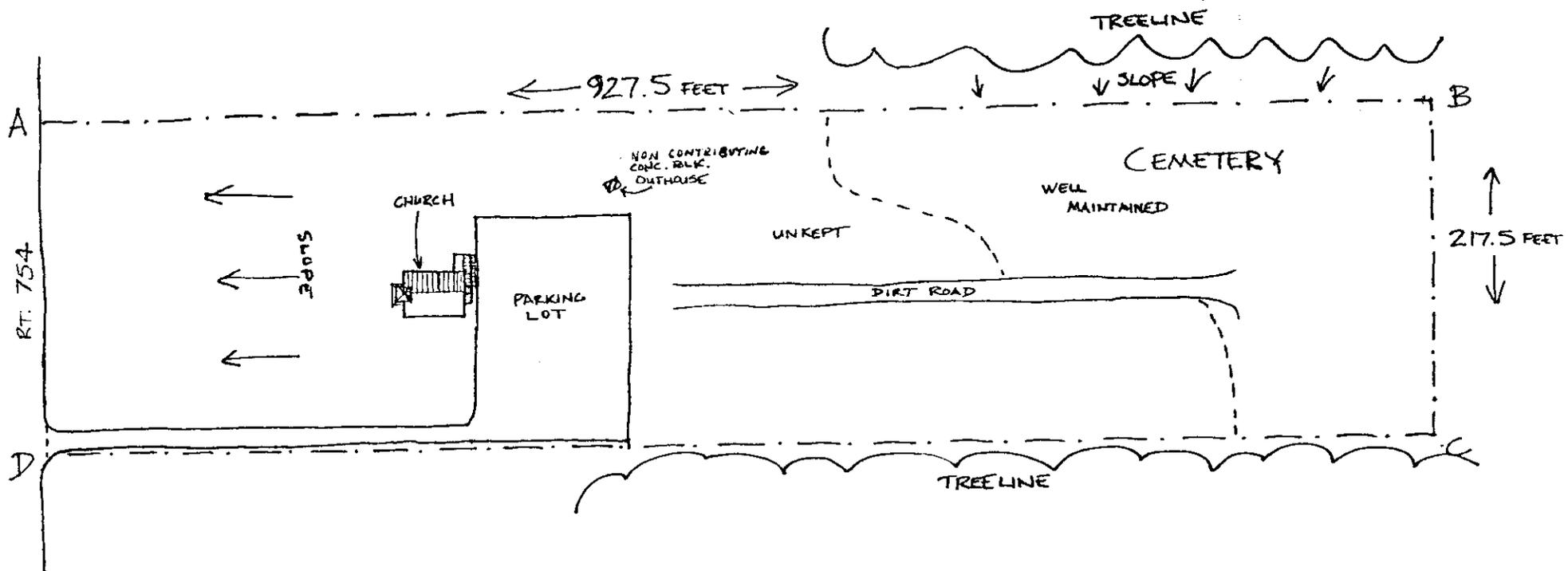
Boundary Justification

The boundaries were chosen to include the church, cemetery, and churchyard.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Gibson Worsham date June 1988
 organization Gibson Worsham, Architect telephone (703) 552-4730
 street & number Route 2, Yellow Sulphur Springs state Virginia zip code 24073
 city or town Christiansburg



60-435 BIG SPRING BAPTIST CHURCH
 K. MARTIN 10/87

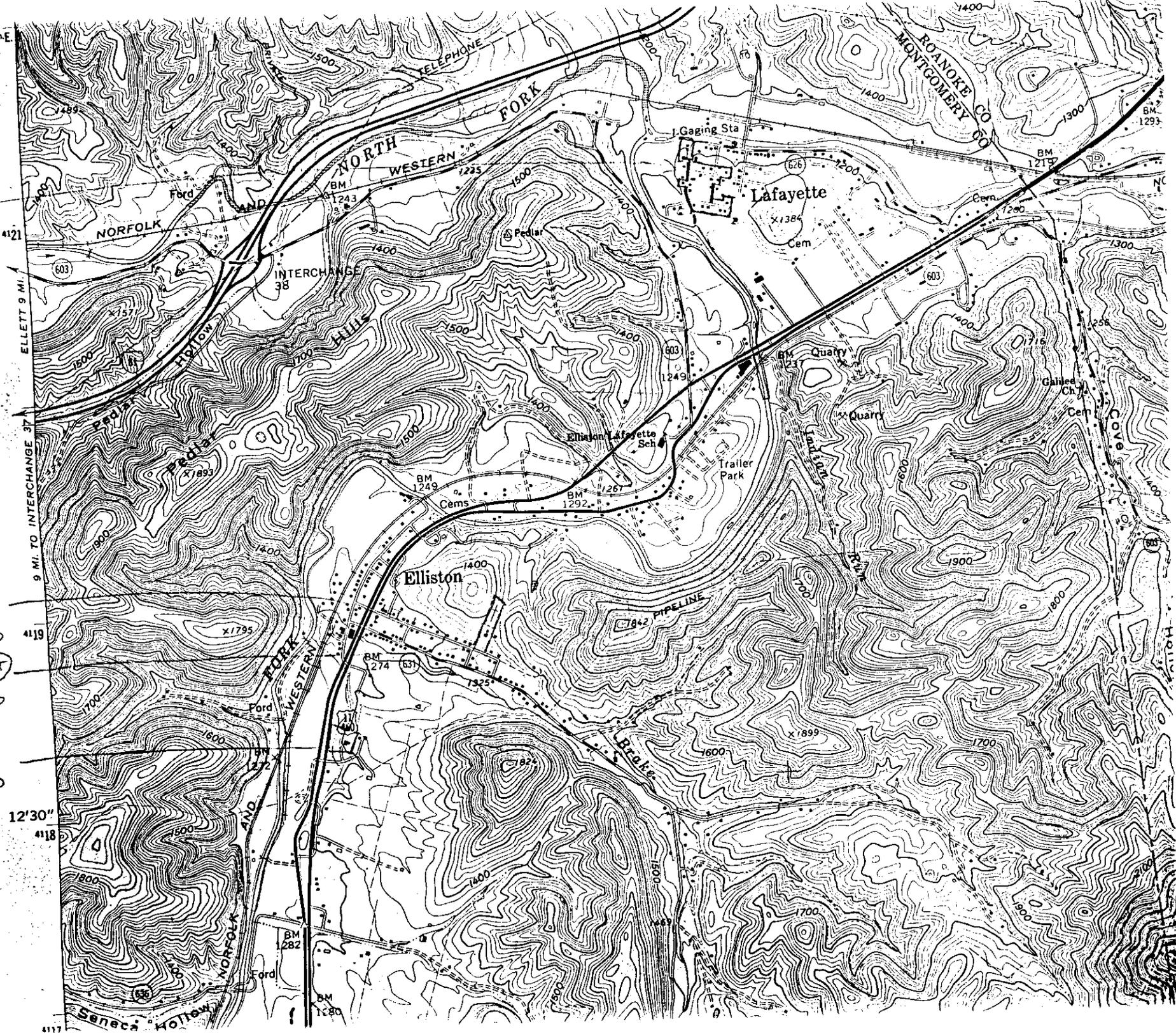
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UTTE
JC DISTRICT
7100 4120930
7370 4121270
0120 4121130
0140 4120890

CALLAWAY
HOUSE
568270 4118160
SPRING BAPTIST
CHURCH
568840 4118720

BENNETT HOUSE
568000 4118340

ELLISTON
QUAD



ELLETT 9 MI. / 9 MI. TO INTERCHANGE 37

4119

12'30" / 4118

4117