

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria (Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- 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 values, 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 (Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or a grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

c. 1804-1920

Significant Dates

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

unknown

Narrative Statement of Significance (Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

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

Name of repository: Union Theological Seminary, Richmond, VA

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of Property 4.7 acres

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
1	17	712800	4124130	2	17	712860 4124120
3	17	712860	4123970	4	17	712760 4123940

x See continuation sheet.**Verbal Boundary Description**

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Dr. William E. Thompson, Pastor of College Presbyterian Church and College Chaplain
 and edited by John Salmon and Julie Vosmik, VA Dept. of Historic Resources

organization Hampden-Sydney College date October 1994
 street & number Box 13 North College Road telephone 804-223-8625
 city or town Hampden-Sydney state VA zip code 23943

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets**Maps**

- A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name/title Trustees of Buffalo Presbyterian Church % Mr. Booker Cunningham
 street & number Route 1 telephone 804-248-6382
 city or town Pamplin state VA zip code 23958

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 7 Page 1

Buffalo Presbyterian Church
Prince Edward County, Virginia

SUMMARY DESCRIPTION

The Buffalo Presbyterian Church is located in a rural setting along State Route 659 just a short distance from the intersection with State Route 658. The present structure, built in the early nineteenth century, is a modest, simply-detailed frame building with a cemetery to the west. The present church and cemetery are located approximately one-half mile from the congregation's original location.

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

The Buffalo Presbyterian Church property consists of two distinct but adjoining tracts of land, which together total 4.66 acres. The church faces east toward the unpaved Route 659 and has to its east side a grove of trees. The remainder of the site, much of which is devoted to a cemetery to the west of the church, is open and surrounded by woods.

The construction date of the church is not known, though documentary and architectural evidence suggest sometime around 1804. The building is a simple frame weatherboarded structure with a gable roof covered with standing seam metal and pierced by a single brick flue. It rests on a continuous stone foundation which has been parged. Early in the twentieth century several significant alterations were made, including the reorientation of the entrance, removal of the gallery and addition of an apse. The original core of the structure measures 50' x 26' and has three nine-over-nine double-hung windows with numerous original panes on the north and south side elevations.

As originally built, the church had separate front entrances for men and women at the west end. Early in the twentieth century the front of the church was reoriented to the east and in 1931 an addition was made consisting of an entrance vestibule flanked on either side by a small classroom. This addition is approximately 10' feet deep and provides a central entrance double-door entrance above which is located a wood painted sign that reads "Buffalo Presbyterian Church Founded 1739." Alterations to the west end include the enclosure of the two original entrances, the addition of a three-sided apse and the removal of the upstairs gallery and its separate entrance on the south elevation. It is not known whether all of these changes were made at the same time or whether they occurred over a period of several years.

The existing entrance is centrally located on the east elevation and is slightly recessed. It is accessed by five concrete steps. The double wood doors each have six panels and are topped by a four-light transom. A single six-over-six double-hung window flanks the entrance. This twentieth century portion of the building is slightly wider than the original, thus it is clearly distinguishable and provides sufficient space for two rooms on either side of the vestibule. The north and south ends of this addition also each have a single six-over-six double-hung window.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 7 Page 2

Buffalo Presbyterian Church
Prince Edward County, Virginia

Despite the alterations that occurred in the early twentieth century, Buffalo Church retains a remarkable degree of integrity. The interior retains its wood floors, plank ceiling, paneled box pews and wood-burning stoves. Wainscoting of beaded boards and door and window surrounds with bulls eye cornerblocks are typical of the mid-nineteenth century. Interior wood doors with four vertical panels are contemporary with the entrance and apse additions.

The space is configured with two isles and three sections of pews facing the raised alter that projects from the apse which is illuminated by two windows. The pews are simply constructed with recessed panels detailing each end. The top moulding is stained and the balance of the pew is painted. At the front of the church and to either side of the alter are two small sections of pews facing north and south. Each of the two classrooms on either side of the entrance have doors leading to both the sanctuary and the vestibule. A pair of matching cast iron wood stoves are located midway in the right and left pew sections and provide the only source of heat. Each is embellished with a relief filigree pattern and share a common flue. Suspended globe light fixtures date from the early twentieth century. The building has no plumbing or heating systems.

The cemetery is located to the south of the church. Between it and the church is a small stone structure, the function of which is unknown. Thought to possibly contain a burial, it is approximately 3 1/2' high and covered with vegetation. The small cemetery possesses a number of stone markers, the earliest of which is dated 1832. Though the majority of markers are manufactured, a handful are simple carved stone tablets. Like the church structure, the cemetery is very well maintained.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 3

Buffalo Presbyterian Church
Prince Edward County, Virginia

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Buffalo Presbyterian Church, which is located in Prince Edward County, Virginia, was constructed in 1804. Its congregation, formed in 1739, is the earliest extant Presbyterian congregation in Southside Virginia. The church building is a typical but increasingly rare example of the vernacular, frame, meetinghouse-style houses of worship of the period. Despite some modification, it retains its integrity as an early-nineteenth-century rural church.

JUSTIFICATION OF CRITERIA

Buffalo Presbyterian Church is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C. It is a typical but rare example of an early-nineteenth-century rural church.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The congregation of Buffalo was formed in 1739 and is the earliest extant Presbyterian congregation in Southside Virginia (that part of the state south of the James River between the Blue Ridge Mountains on the west and the coast on the east). As dissenters from the established church, members of the congregation were regarded with some suspicion by the colonial government. It is perhaps not surprising that on 24 September 1776, less than three months after the adoption of the Declaration of Independence, the congregation was the first to formally petition the General Assembly of Virginia to disestablish the Church of England. Written by the Reverend Richard Sankey, the pastor of Buffalo Presbyterian Church, the petition was followed by others from dozens of dissenting congregations. It was not until 1786, ten years later, that Thomas Jefferson's Statute for Religious Freedom achieved the end sought by Sankey and his fellow citizens.

Following the destruction by fire of an earlier structure, in 1804 the congregation moved half a mile to its present location and occupied a new church building. In keeping with the dissenting tradition, this wooden frame structure was plain and unornamented. Though simply detailed, the church is well-proportioned and retains a significant amount of original materials. For its location and time of construction, the church is a sophisticated and articulate expression of a congregation's vision for a suitable and fitting place of worship.

During the antebellum period the church was closely associated with Hampden-Sydney College and Union Theological Seminary. Richard Sankey, in fact, was a founding trustee of the college. John Holt Rice, founder of the seminary, regularly preached from the Buffalo Church pulpit in the 1820s. Joseph R. Wilson, the father of president Woodrow Wilson, was a visiting minister to the church while serving as a professor at the college.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 4

Buffalo Presbyterian Church
Prince Edward County, Virginia

The records of Buffalo Church date to 1804 and document the religious life of its congregation. Members were held to high standards of conduct and could be excommunicated for such "crimes" as fighting or intoxication. For example, in September 1804 William Baldwin was questioned regarding a beating he had given John Whitehead, who had cursed and threatened him. A witness to the altercation, as well as Baldwin's testimony, persuaded the other members that Baldwin had "manifested an uncommon degree of forebarance [*sic*] under the provocation he had received, and that it was impossible for him to avoid the affray which had taken place." On the other hand, in 1810 John Cunningham was "suspended from communion" until the truth of a charge of drunkenness could be ascertained. Cunningham was not "restored" to communion until 23 April 1831, twenty-one years later.

The size of the congregation, which included slaves, reached a peak of 124 members in 1842. Gradually the numbers declined, until in 1936 there were 29 members. Although the membership has remained small since, the congregation is active and vitally interested in preserving their important example of a rural Virginia church.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 9 & 10 Page 5

Buffalo Presbyterian Church
Prince Edward County, Virginia

MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

- Aldridge, Patricia (ed.), *Virginia Presbyterians in American Life: Hanover Presbytery, 1755-1980* (Richmond, VA: Hanover Presbytery, 1982)
- Bradshaw, Herbert Clarence, *History of Hampden-Sydney College Vol. I.* (Farmville, VA: Privately Printed, 1976)
- Bradshaw, Herbert Clarence, *History of Prince Edward County Virginia*, (Farmville, VA: The Farmville Herald, 1955)
- Brimm, Henry M. and Rachal, William M. E. (ed.), *Yesterday and Tomorrow In the Synod of Virginia*, (Richmond, VA: The Synod of Virginia, 1962)
- Thompson, Ernest Trice, *Presbyterians In the South, Vol. I.* (Richmond, VA: John Knox Press, 1963, 3 volumes)

GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

UTM References (cont'd)

- 5 17/712730/4123995
6 17/712780/4124020
7 17/712760/4124040
8 17/712780/4124050

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary of the nominated property is delineated by the polygon whose vertices are marked by the following UTM reference points: 1 17/712800/4124130, 2 17/712860/4124120, 3 17/712860/4123970, 4 17/712760/4123940, 5 17/712730/4123995, 6 17/712780/4124020, 7 17/712760/4124040, and 8 17/712780/4124050.

Boundary Justification

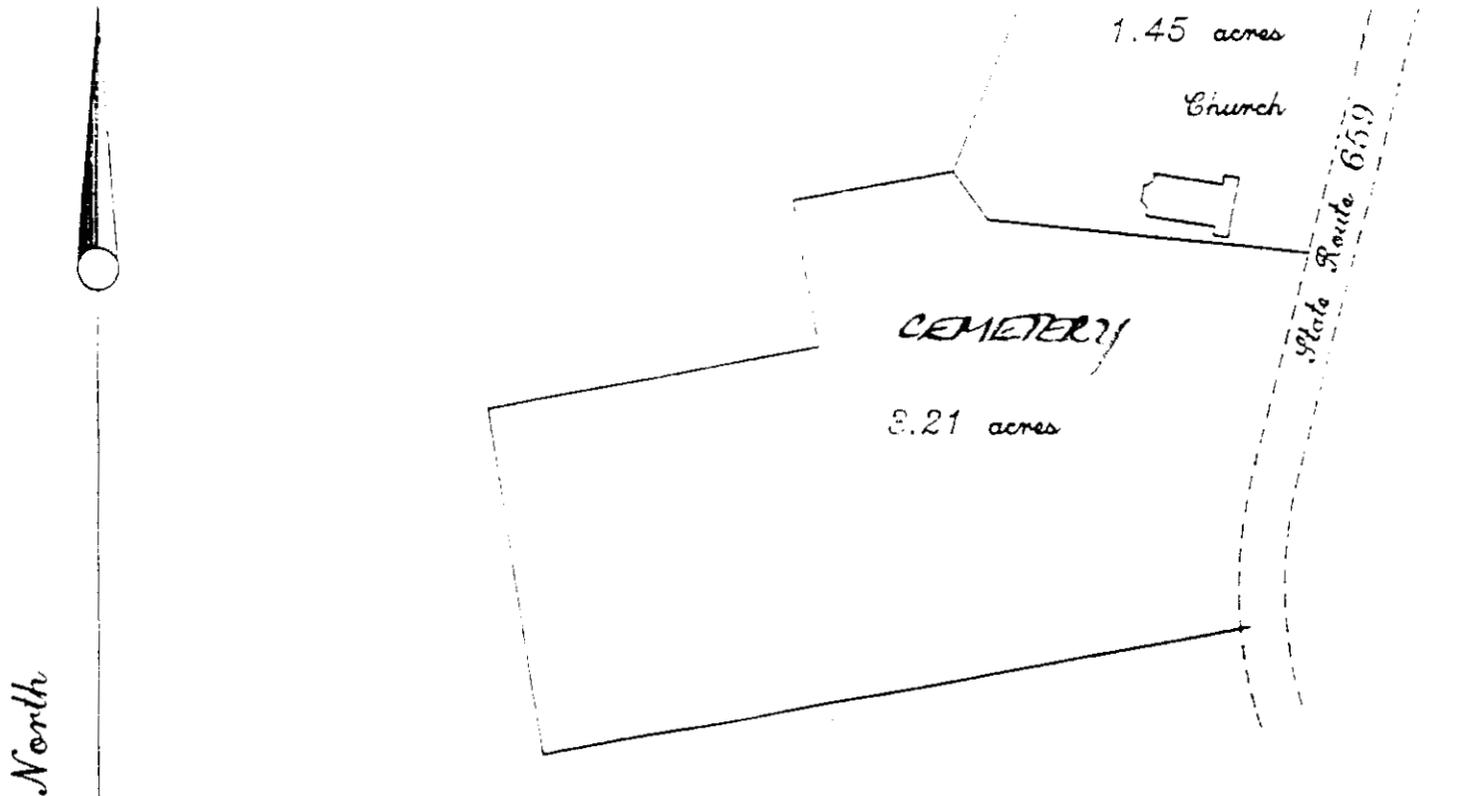
The nominated area includes the church and cemetery historically associated with Buffalo Presbyterian Church.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 10 Page 6

Buffalo Presbyterian Church
Prince Edward County, Virginia



(no scale)

Buffalo Presbyterian Church
Prince Edward Co.

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

52281 SW
(PAMPLIN)

78° 37' 30"
37° 15'
1:25,000 m. N.

711000m. E.

712

713

714 35'

FEET

- 800 4124 130
- 760 4124 120
- 720 4123 970
- 680 4123 940
- 640 4123 995
- 600 4124 020
- 560 4124 040
- 520 4124 050

