

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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| LISTED ON: | |
| VLR | 06/16/2011 |
| NRHP | 08/18/2011 |

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).

1. Name of Property

historic name Belmont Methodist-Episcopal Church

other names/site number Metropolitan Community Church of the Blue Ridge; DHR File No. 128-6271

2. Location

street & number 806 Jamison Avenue SE

| | |
|-----|---------------------|
| N/A | not for publication |
| N/A | vicinity |

city or town Roanoke

state Virginia code VA county Independent City code 770 zip code 24013

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,
I hereby certify that this X 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 X meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

 national statewide X local

[Signature] _____
Signature of certifying official/Title Date 2/1/11

Virginia Department of Historic Resources
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official Date

Title State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

4. 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:) _____

Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public - Local
- public - State
- public - Federal

Category of Property
(Check only **one** box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- building(s)
- object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

| Contributing | Noncontributing | |
|--------------|-----------------|--------------|
| 1 | | buildings |
| | | sites |
| | | structures |
| | | objects |
| | | buildings |
| 1 | 0 | Total |

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing) N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

RELIGION: religious facility, church school

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

RELIGION: religious facility; work in progress

SOCIAL: community use

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

20TH CENTURY REVIVALS: Late Gothic Revival

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation: STONE

walls: BRICK

roof: SYNTHETICS: composite shingles

other: CONCRETE, WOOD

Narrative Description

Summary Paragraph

The Belmont Methodist-Episcopal Church was constructed between 1917 and 1921 on a prominent street corner, one-half-mile east of downtown Roanoke, and three-tenths of a mile south of the historic Norfolk & Western Railway Shops where many who worshipped at the church were employed. Designed by one of the leading church architects in Virginia, Herbert L. Cain, the church is a significant, uniquely crafted example of the Late Gothic Revival style with its complex roof form, steeply-pitched gables and parapets, large pointed-arch windows, crenellated corner towers, buttresses, cast-concrete quatrefoils and other detailing. Romanesque-style influence is also exhibited in the form of round-arched decorative motifs and window apertures, and rusticated stonework. The building consists of a single block, three stories tall, with a 130- by-80-foot rectangular footprint. The bell tower, at the southwest corner of the church, stands well over three stories tall. Inside the building is nearly 20,000 square feet of floor space. The sanctuary, located in the southern half of the building, occupies the full building height and is lighted by a vast array of stained-glass windows manufactured in Germany. The northern half of the building is divided into three floor levels with school rooms, offices and communal areas.

Narrative Description

The former Belmont Methodist-Episcopal Church, now the Metropolitan Community Church of the Blue Ridge, stands at the northeast corner of Jamison Avenue and Eighth St. in southeast Roanoke. Jamison Avenue is a busy 2-lane, one-way street through a predominately residential section near downtown Roanoke. The principal façade of the church faces south toward Jamison Avenue. A less formal, secondary entrance façade on Eighth Street has considerably more fenestration. The Gothic pointed arch employed throughout the church design is the wider, blunt-pointed arch, rather than the narrow, sharply pointed lancet arch more typically seen in Gothic Revival designs. The Romanesque-style round arch is mainly seen above the second floor level, on the towers and parapets.

Two identical main entrances are located at the southwest and southeast corners of the church, on Jamison Avenue. They consist of gauged-brick, blunt-pointed-arch openings accented by cast-concrete quoins taking the place of pilasters on each side. Within the arches are paneled folding doors with arch-shaped, lighted transoms. The wooden reveals on each side of the door openings are paneled. There are numerous stained-glass windows of various sizes and shapes in the walls of the sanctuary, protected on the outside by plexi-glass in wooden frames. The two largest stained-glass windows, with multiple panes arranged in a blunt-pointed arch opening, appear in the south and east elevations. The south elevation window is by far the larger of the two. The basement and 1st floor of the school wing are well lighted with an ample number of simple, one-over-one wood sash. Immediately above each second floor aperture is a corresponding length of soldier brick course. Between windows or groups of windows are by brick buttresses with beveled concrete caps at the top and at mid-height. The square-shaped spandrels between the first and second-floor windows are enhanced with a square, geometric interpretation of the Gothic quatrefoil motif, made of concrete. Each quatrefoil is set within a square brick panel, framed by sailor bricks on all sides. Third floor windows appear on the west and north elevations only, within blunt-pointed-arch openings. They consist of one-over-one sash set within molded wood frames. The arches are comprised of gauged soldier bricks with square, cast-concrete imposts.

The embanked foundation of the church, incorporating a full basement, is most visible along the side and rear elevations, where it reaches a maximum height of about seven feet above grade. The foundation is constructed of squared, limestone blocks of various sizes, laid in distinct courses, with convex mortar joints. Some of the stone blocks are quite large, measuring several feet across. The stone faces are large cut in high relief. Between

the stonework and the brickmasonry above, is a thick, continuous belt course of cast concrete, beveled at the top and painted white. The exterior brick walls consist of high-quality, smooth-faced, red bricks laid in American bond. The complex roof is comprised of both hipped and flat sections covered with composite shingles and built-up membrane roofing, respectively.

Within the building, the large sanctuary can accommodate approximately 600 persons, including a gallery in back of the sanctuary, reached by two original staircases in the entry vestibule. All four outer walls of the sanctuary are adorned with intricate, lead-camed, stained-glass windows; though the north wall windows are darkened by the adjoining school rooms. Some of the windows depict Christian iconography or biblical figures, though most display highly colorful geometric patterns with no specific imagery. The brilliant stained glass windows were made in Germany (likely by Franz Mayer and Company of Munich), and installed in 1921. Some of the windows are said to contain rare, fluted glass.¹ A large fellowship hall and multiple classrooms on the north side of the sanctuary were part of the original construction.

Integrity Statement

A comparison of a c.1966 photograph with a current picture reveals that few, if any exterior modifications have been made to the church in the last 45 years. Indeed, little has changed since the church was completed in 1921. Most, if not all window sashes appear to be original to the 1917–1921 construction. The interior of the church was renovated in the 1970s, but the main components are well-preserved, such as the large quantity of original stained glass in all four walls of the sanctuary. The area surrounding the church has also changed very little. Houses built between 1900 and 1920 still predominate throughout the neighborhood. Some commercial development is present, but limited to the main traffic corridors that were once serviced by streetcars.

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.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1917-1921

Significant Dates

1917-1921

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Cain, Herbert L., principal architect

Miller, Homer M., architect

Clemmer, John L., building contractor

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply)

Property is:

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

Period of Significance (justification)

See below

Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)

See below

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph

The Belmont Methodist-Episcopal Church, completed in 1921, stands among the City of Roanoke's most significant Protestant churches dating to the first quarter of the 20th century, and remains today an important component of the historic Belmont Neighborhood in Southeast Roanoke. The church, designed by noted Virginia architects Herbert L. Cain and Homer M. Miller, survives in excellent condition, with few modifications. Sited on a corner lot along a major thoroughfare, the imposing church building is a highly visible and easily recognizable architectural landmark that incorporates an extensive array of Gothic Revival design elements, superior workmanship, and durable, high quality building materials such as brick and stone. It is nominated under Criterion C in the area of Architecture, at the local level of significance. Criteria Consideration A, for religious properties, applies, given that the stated significance of the church is chiefly embodied in its architecture and construction. The period of significance spans from 1917, the year construction of the church began, and ends in 1921, the year construction was finally completed.

Narrative Statement of Significance

Architectural Context

Of the three churches built in the Belmont Neighborhood between 1917 and 1945, the Belmont Methodist-Episcopal (M.E.) Church is the largest and most prominent.² Among the six extant churches built between 1915 and 1946 in Southeast Roanoke, only the Belmont Baptist Church rivals the Belmont M.E. Church in terms of scale, expense, and architectural complexity. Both churches are vast, Gothic Revival masonry structures, built about the same time, in prominent, busy street-corner locations; and both have large, multi-story classroom wings. They appear to be equally worthy of designation under National Register Criterion C for Architecture. These two working-class neighborhood churches rank among an elite group of architecturally significant churches in the City of Roanoke that collectively represent the pinnacle of church design in southwestern Virginia. Furthermore, they incorporate some of the finest workmanship and building materials available at the time. The city prospered greatly and experienced rapid growth during the first quarter of the 20th century. Local churches thrived, and their members donated relatively large portions of their incomes toward construction of prestigious houses of worship. By the 1930s, new churches constructed in Roanoke were decidedly more modest and practical, a trend that has continued steadily since then. In contrast to those built by preceding generations, few of the newer churches could be considered architectural works of distinction.

The Architects

Though the architect of the Belmont M.E. Church is not named in church histories, a copy of the architect's rendering is included in Edward Walter's 1991 book on the church.³ In the lower right-hand corner of the rendering is inscribed: "Herbert L. Cain, architect." Directly below Cain's name appears the name of Homer M. Miller, who presumably assisted Cain with the church design. Miller (1879-1959) was a prolific Roanoke-based architect who designed a wide variety of buildings, including a number of churches. Most of his church designs date to the 1920s. In 1922, one year after the Belmont Church was completed, Cain again partnered with Homer Miller to design the Calvary Baptist Church, an extant Classical Revival building located at Campbell Avenue and Sixth Street near downtown Roanoke, completed in 1924.⁴

Principal architect Herbert Levi Cain (1888-1963) came from Delaware by way of Philadelphia, and in 1912 set up his practice in Richmond, Virginia. There he remained active in the profession through the 1950s, having become known as one of the leading church architects in the state. Of Cain's 50 commissions (1913 to 1953) identified by Wells and Dalton in *The Virginia Architects 1835 – 1955*, 46 were churches or church school structures. Belmont M.E. Church, however, was not listed among Cain's known works. All of his churches appear to have been for Protestant denominations, the vast majority Baptist. All of his listed commissions were

in Virginia, but it is noted that Cain was a registered architect in Florida, North Carolina and West Virginia. Within Virginia, his practice was not geographically limited. He designed buildings to be constructed as far afield as the City of Norton, in the distant western reaches of Virginia.⁵

Belmont Church Historic Background

Belmont, for which the church is named, is among the oldest and best-preserved neighborhoods in the Roanoke Valley. The neighborhood developed on the south side of the mile-long strip of Norfolk and Western Railway East End Shops established in 1882, the same year the City of Roanoke was founded. The Belmont Land Company formed in 1888, and they and other investors capitalized on the influx of railroad workers needing homes. By the turn of the 20th century, residential development had expanded along the rail lines to the north and west, and streetcar lines to the south and east.⁶

The Belmont M.E. Church began as a mission Sunday school in 1891 with meetings held in a store on the corner of Dale Avenue and Fourth Street, Southeast. In June 30, 1893, the property was deeded by Mr. and Mrs. S.H. Kefauver to the Belmont M.E. Church.⁷ The first Belmont M.E. Church was a frame building said to have been the first church in Southeast Roanoke. It was constructed in 1893 at the northeast corner of Jamison Avenue and Eighth Street, but was replaced by a new, larger Gothic Revival edifice, constructed of white brick, in 1910. The new church, however, burned in the early morning hours of January 13, 1917. Undeterred, the congregation, under pastor Reverend Joseph H. Bathis, resolved the next day to build an even bigger and better church on the same site.⁸

On November 2, 1917, a huge crowd, pictured in the Roanoke Times, attended a ceremonial laying of the cornerstone for the present church building; yet more than three years would pass before it was completed, at a cost of 40,000 dollars. Local building contractor and church member, John W. Clemmer, took over from the original contractor to complete the construction in 1921.⁹

In 1917, the American Viscose Corporation Rayon Plant was established on the Roanoke River, six-tenths of a mile south of the Belmont Neighborhood. The plant drew scores of workers from outside the area, which coincided with 1917–1921 construction of the Belmont M.E. Church. By 1923, church attendance reached 1,557, making it the largest church in its conference. By 1928 the rayon plant was reported to be the largest in the world, and its roughly 5,000 workers and their families surely crowded Southeast Roanoke's houses of worship on Sundays.¹⁰

The church membership continued to thrive with Roanoke's growing population from the 1920s through the 1940s; and for a time, it operated the largest church school and largest nursery of any church in the Old Baltimore Conference (prior to divisions in the Methodist Church in 1939). Reverend Bathis served from 1916 to 1920, a period in which the church began to experience a large increase in membership. In 1918, the church membership numbered 912, and church school members numbered 1,100.¹¹ During the ministry of Reverend S. Register Neel (1929-1936), the church reached its peak membership of 1,840, with more than 900 Sunday school participants.¹²

The first parsonage was built beside the church in 1906, but when the church burned in 1917, building materials were salvaged and used to construct a new parsonage a few blocks away, at 714 Dale Avenue, Southeast.¹³ The most recent parsonage was a Ranch style house erected in 1964, which is no longer associated with the church.¹⁴

After becoming the Belmont United Methodist Church, membership declined steadily in the latter part of the 20th century and Methodist services came to an end. However, the Metropolitan Community Church of the Blue Ridge, affiliated with the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches, acquired the property in

2003. Current plans call for careful, historically sensitive rehabilitation of the building and reclamation of its importance to spiritual and social life in the surrounding community.

Notes

1. Walters, *Belmont United Methodist Church*, 93.
2. Blanton, "Belmont Architectural Survey" report, 1999, 61.
3. Walters, *Belmont United Methodist Church*, 32.
4. Wells and Dalton, 297-300.
5. Wells and Dalton, 62-63.
6. Blanton, 17-21.
7. City of Roanoke Deed Card for tax parcel 4120112.
8. *Belmont Methodist Church*, 1966, 13.
9. Barnes, 545; Walters, 11.
10. Blanton, 23, 27-28.
11. *Belmont Methodist Church*, 7.
12. The church school operated through 1984. Walters, 79.
13. Walters, 11.
14. *Belmont Methodist Church*, 13.

9. Major Bibliographic References:

AIA Historical Directory of American Architects, entry for Herbert L. Cain. www.aia.org

Barnes, Raymond P. *A History of the City of Roanoke*. Radford, Virginia: Commonwealth Press, 1968.

Belmont Methodist Church: Commemorating Seventy-five Years of Christian Service in the City of Roanoke.
Roanoke: The Church, 1966.

City of Roanoke real estate records.

Blanton, Alison, for Hill Studio, P.C. "Historic Architectural Survey of the Belmont Neighborhood." Roanoke:
May, 1999. Virginia Department of Historic Resources.

Walters, Edward L. *Belmont United Methodist Church : Commemorating One Hundred Years of Christian Service to the City, State, Nation and the World*. Roanoke, Va.: The Church, 1991.

Wells, John and Robert Dalton, *The Virginia Architects 1835 –1955*. Richmond: 1997.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography (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: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): 128-6271

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property .238
(Do not include previously listed resource acreage)

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

| | | | | | | | |
|---|-------------------------------------|--|---|---|-------------------------------------|--|---|
| 1 | <u>17</u> Zone | <u>594836</u> Easting | <u>4125044</u> Northing | 3 | <u> </u> Zone | <u> </u> Easting | <u> </u> Northing |
| 2 | <u> </u> Zone | <u> </u> Easting | <u> </u> Northing | 4 | <u> </u> Zone | <u> </u> Easting | <u> </u> Northing |

Verbal Boundary Description (describe the boundaries of the property)

The nominated parcel boundary fully encompasses, and is limited to Roanoke city tax parcels 4120112 and 4120113. The boundary is identified on the accompanying site map.

Boundary Justification (explain why the boundaries were selected)

The nominated parcel boundary includes the church building and the neighboring parcel to the east, which was historically the extent of church grounds.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Michael J. Pulice
organization Virginia Department of Historic Resources date March 10, 2011
street & number 962 Kime Lane telephone 540-387-5443
city or town Salem state VA zip code 24153
e-mail michael.pulice@dhr.virginia.gov

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **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. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Continuation Sheets**
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Photographs:

Submit clear and descriptive black and white photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map.

Name of Property: Belmont M. E. Church

City or Vicinity: City of Roanoke, Virginia

Photographer: Michael J. Pulice

Date Photographed: August 4, 2010

Description of Photograph(s) and number:

- 1 of 8. Exterior view, facing northeast.
- 2 of 8. Exterior view, facing northwest.
- 3 of 8. Exterior view, west elevation, central section closeup.
- 4 of 8. Exterior view, north (rear) elevation, facing east.
- 5 of 8. Exterior view, top of tower closeup.
- 6 of 8. Interior view, sanctuary, facing southeast corner.
- 7 of 8. Interior view, sanctuary, south wall & windows.
- 8 of 8. Interior view, rear of sanctuary and gallery.

Belmont Methodist-Episcopal Church
Name of Property

Roanoke, Virginia
County and State

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.460 et seq.).

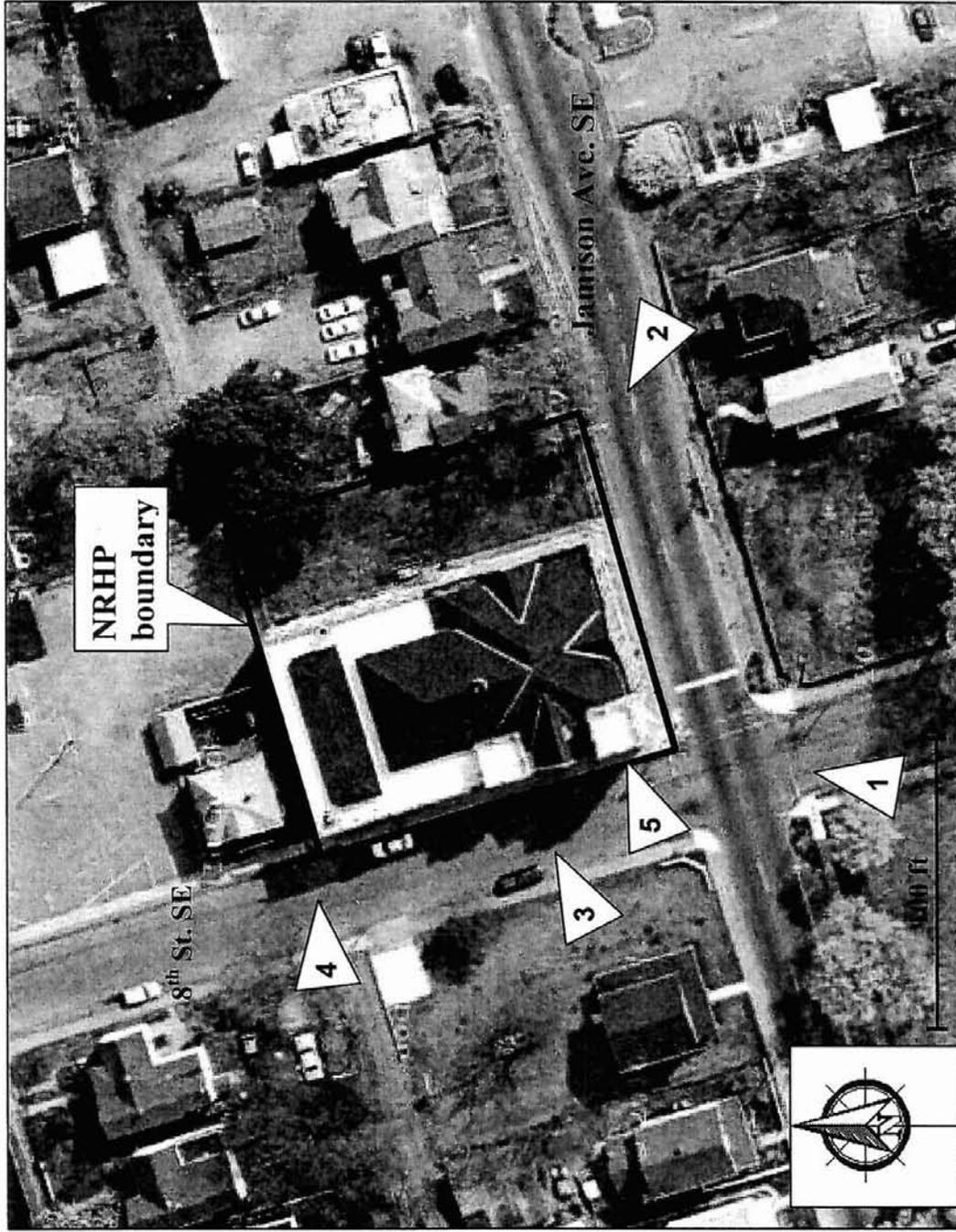
Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

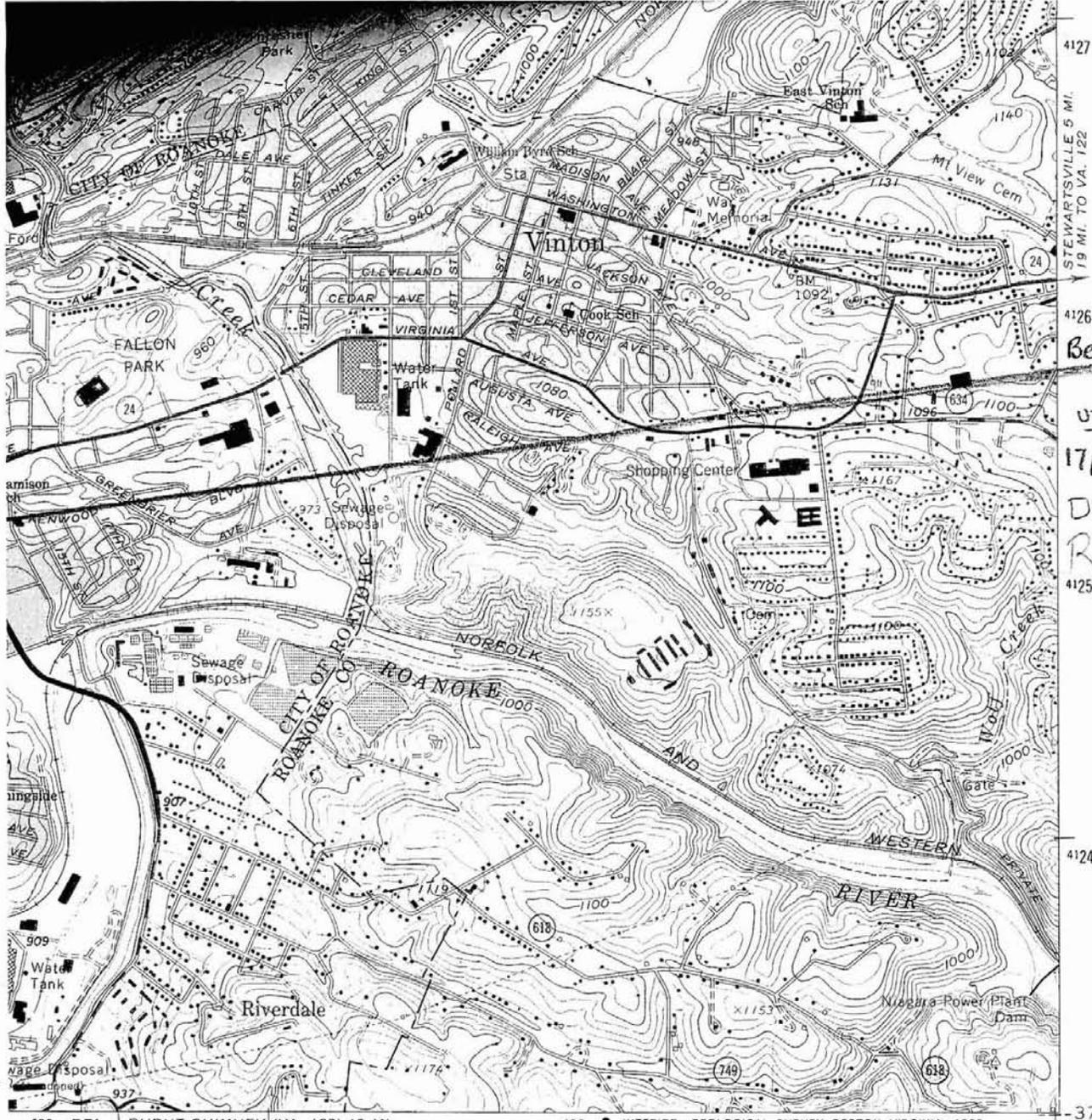
**Belmont Methodist
Church**

Roanoke, Virginia

**VDHR
128-6271**

△ Denotes photo
number and
direction





Belmont Methodist Church
 UTM
 17/594836/4125044
 DHR # 128-6271
 Roanoke Quad

96 55' BURNT CHIMNEY (VA. 122) 12 MI.

98 ● INTERIOR—GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, RESTON, VIRGINIA—1988
 599000m E

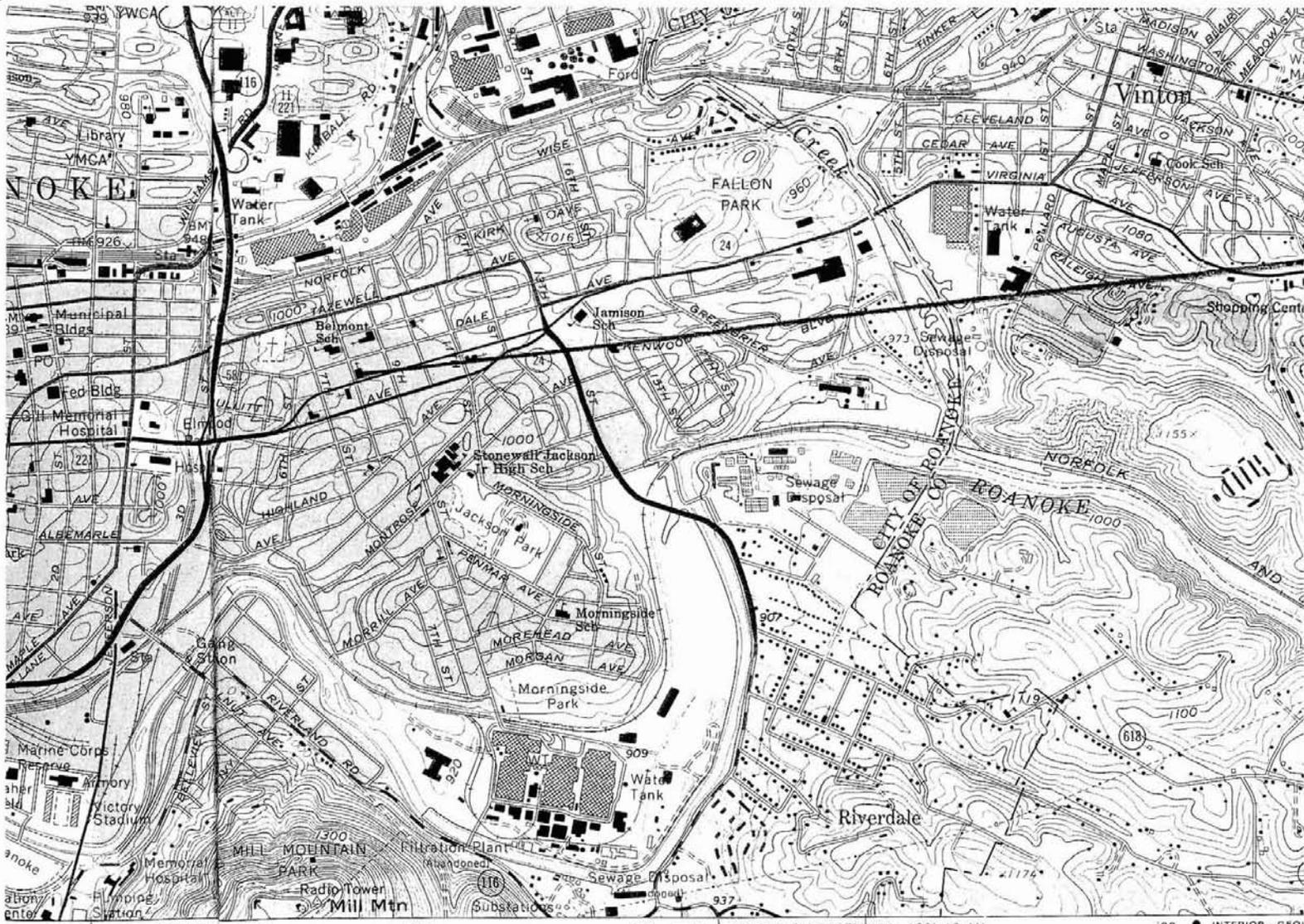
37° 15'
 79° 52' 30"

1 MILE

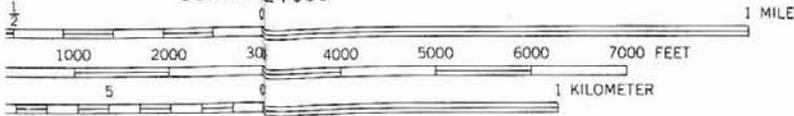
ROAD CLASSIFICATION

- Heavy-duty Light-duty
- Medium-duty Unimproved dirt
- Interstate Route U. S. Route State Route

HARDY
 5058 11 NE



(GARDE CITY)
5058 NW
SCALE 24000



CONTOUR INTERVAL 20 FEET
NATIONAL GEODETIC VERTICAL DATUM OF 1929

- Heavy-duty ———
- Medium-duty ———
- Interstate Ro

MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS
FOR SALE BY U. S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY
IVIER, COLORADO 80225, RESTON, VIRGINIA 22092
SION OF MINERAL RESOURCES, CHARLOTTESVILLE, VIRGINIA 22903
IBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST



Revisions shown in purple and woodland compiled in cooperation with Commonwealth of Virginia agencies from aerial photographs taken 1982 and other sources. This information not field checked. Map edited 1984