

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Religion: religious facility

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Religion: religious facility**7. Description**

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

Late 19th and 20th Century Revivals:Late Gothic Revival

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Stone:Limestonewalls Brickroof Metal

other _____

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Currently standing flush with Old Stage Road, which extends in front of the building, the Chilhowie United Methodist Church (formerly the Chihowie Methodist Episcopal Church) retains its original form and architectural integrity. Built in 1893-94 of local pressed golden brown brick, the church is a cruciform-plan, gable-roofed structure with a central front projecting bell tower. The church's plan, lancet windows with contrasting brick hood molds, transepts, and vaulted ceiling indicate that the church is an unusually sophisticated example of the Late Gothic Revival style.

The church's double-door entrance, located at the base of the central front bell tower, has a pointed-arched stained-glass transom. High above the doorway is a stained-glass rose window. The bell tower features recessed brick panels with decorative brick corbeling below a louvered wooden belfry. A trapdoor in the high ceiling of the vestibule gives access to the belfry housing the original bell. The bell, operated by a hand-held rope, has a base diameter of 24 inches and is inscribed as

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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

Period of Significance
1893-94

Significant Dates
1894

Cultural Affiliation
n/a

Significant Person
n/a

Architect/Builder
unknown

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

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

In the last decade of the nineteenth century the town of Chilhowie was a sparsely settled rural community. The erection of a church of such distinguished architectural character as Chilhowie Methodist Church in 1893-94 was indeed an unusual addition to the community. This architecturally sophisticated, Late Gothic Revival-style, cruciform-plan building was then and continues to be unique in Smyth County where the traditional rectangular church form prevails. Although the source of the cruciform plan is unknown there is some speculation that the design was greatly influenced by the superintendent of the local brick factory, E. J. Rutland.* Rutland was born in Sheerness, England, in 1853 and grew to adulthood there. He came to Chilhowie from Ohio in 1890 to manage the new brick plant. His familiarity with English church architecture of the period may have influenced the design for Chilhowie M. E. Church.

* a member of the congregation

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9. Major Bibliographical References

Price, Richard N., Holston Methodism: From Its Origins to the Present Time, 5 Vols., Publishing House of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, Nashville, 1904-1914.
Stephenson, George J., Increase in Excellence, A History of Emory and Henry College 1936-1968, Meredith, Publishing Company, N.Y., 1963.
Smyth County Deed Book 21, p.455, 1893.
Washington County Court Records, 1806, volume 3, p. 499.
Wilson, Goodridge, Smyth County History and Traditions, Kingsport Press, Inc., Kingsport, 1932.
Church Records of 1866.
American Clay Magazine, "Fifty Years a Brick Maker", undated article, ca 1925.

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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:

VA Department of Historic Resources
221 Governor St. Richmond, VA 23230

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property less than one acre

UTM References

A	<u>17</u>	<u>439146</u>	<u>4072963</u>	B	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
C	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	D	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary of Chilhowie United Methodist Church property is shown on the accompanying surveyor's map dated July 30, 1979.

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Boundary Justification

The boundary includes the entire town lot that has been historically associated with the property. In 1988 a narrow strip of land was obtained at the rear of the property to accomodate a drainage system.

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11. Form Prepared By

name/title	<u>Nell W. Greever, Church Historian</u>	date	<u> </u>
organization	<u>Chinowie United Methodist Church</u>	telephone	<u>703-646-3562</u>
street & number	<u>Route 1 Box 48</u>	state	<u>VA</u>
city or town	<u>Chilhowie</u>	zip code	<u>24319</u>

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follows: C. S. Bell and Co., Hillsborough, Ohio, No. 24. Rising from the four corners of the belfry are pinnacles consisting of wooden piers topped by pointed spires that are covered with tin shingles. A much taller central spire, covered in pressed tin shingles, rises above the wooden belfry. The exterior of the original building remains virtually undisturbed since its construction.

The double-door entrance topped by a pointed-arched stained-glass transom is repeated in the entrance between the vestibule and the sanctuary. Primitive wood graining appears on each panel of the sanctuary side of these double doors. Overhead is a vaulted ceiling finished in tongue-and-groove, three-inch-wide, dark-stained, pine boards. Completely surrounding the sanctuary is a wainscoting, also of tongue-and-groove three-inch pine boards. Between the wainscoting and the ceiling the plastered walls are painted a soft white.

About 1915, a pine floor, slanting toward the chancel area, was laid over the original floor. At that time curved oak pews were installed, replacing handmade benches; central heating replaced the two wood stoves; and gas chandeliers gave way to electric globe fixtures. In 1987 the lighting fixtures, having long been

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considered inadequate, were removed to the hallway and replaced by larger hanging fixtures of a Gothic design sympathetic to the character of the Church's interior.

Shades of blue predominate in the stained glass of the lancet windows with intermingled soft tones of gold, green, and rose. A fleur-de-lis design tops the smaller windows of the narthex. The curved pews are arranged in two equal sections with the wider aisle in the center and auxiliary aisles on either side of the nave.

The adult choir space occupies the west end of the transept, while the children's choir space occupies the corresponding east transept. Towering above the recessed apse is a Gothic arch framed in wood with a round stained-glass window positioned within the arch apex. At the center of this window is the crown and cross symbol. Extending across the chancel is a walnut altar rail dating from the mid-nineteenth century, having been brought from the earlier Sulphur Springs Church. Along the railing is a cushioned kneeling bench. Within the wide chancel are a Hammond organ, a piano, and oak furniture. The chancel furniture consists of a raised pulpit, lectern, altar, chairs, and an octagonal baptismal font, all of which were the gift of Miss

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Cordelia Copenhaver in 1948. The scarlet dossal, aisle carpeting, and cushions complete the simple beauty of this old sanctuary.

The building was enlarged in 1935 by a two-story brick Sunday school addition to the back of the church which follows the lines of the original structure. In 1960 a two-story brick annex was added to the east side of the building. During 1989-90 a standing-seam metal roof was laid over the entire building.

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Except for the additions of 1935 and 1960 the church remains as it was originally built; a cruciform-plan, pressed brick structure with a bell tower topped by a tall spire, stained-glass lancet windows, a vaulted ceiling, and well-preserved interior. The congregation was established in 1806 as the Sulphur Springs Methodist Church; however, the congregation built its present church at a site closer to the Chilhowie community in 1893-94. Today, the church remains an expression of faith and permanence to many residents of the town and county.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Chilhowie United Methodist Church had its roots in the Sulphur Springs Methodist Church of 1806 which was established by early settlers of this mountainous region. The congregation worshipped for many years in log and brick structures in a rural location. In the early 1890s a small business community was forming in nearby Chilhowie and sentiment grew within the church to move into that more accessible area. A local brick plant offered the church a large order of brick that had been rejected by a customer because of its color, and plans for the move began.

There is no written history or local church records of the church during this period. On the night of January 29, 1909, a fire

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destroyed several of the town's businesses. The church, which was a quarter-mile away was not threatened; however, in his report of February 27, 1909, the Reverend M. J. Wysor, pastor of the church, wrote, "We had the misfortune to have all of our official records destroyed by the fire in Chilhowie". These records were apparently in the possession of officers of the church.

Some of the materials used in constructing the church were recycled from older buildings. Older members and residents of the town recall being told that the Sulphur Springs Church was dismantled and even the hand-hewn limestone of the foundation was brought to the town site where any usable material went into the building. The source of the architectural plan has not been verified. Long-time residents of the town tell of local craftsmen and their work on the building. In a Smyth County newspaper, the Marion Democrat, dated November 17, 1893, there is an item reporting an injury of a Chilhowie carpenter that was caused by a falling rafter during construction of the church.

A handwritten affidavit dated September 22, 1951, of an elderly member, Mrs. William T. (Vinnie G.) Smith, states that the church was built in 1893 and was completed and dedicated in June 1894. She states further that the bell was a gift of John McKinnon of

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San Antonio, Texas. District church records confirm the date of dedication as June 24, 1894, with the Reverend E. W. Moore officiating. In early years the bell was rung regularly for worship services but in recent years only on special occasions.

In 1844 there was a division of the Methodist Church in America brought about by the debate over slavery. Although many pastors and church members of this area stood firmly against slavery, southern allegiance was strong and the Chilhowie church belonged to the southern faction until national reunification of the Methodist Church in 1939.

At the turn of the century a white picket fence protected the 15-20 foot lawn in front of the church and horses were tethered in back of the building. A small building on the west side housed an acetylene gas tank from which an underground pipe carried fuel to the gas lighting fixtures in the sanctuary.

For several years the new church provided the only local Sunday School; it was well attended and retained the name of Sulphur Springs Sunday School. A parsonage was built about two hundred yards from the church in 1902 and the Chilhowie church became the nucleus of a group including four more rural Methodist churches

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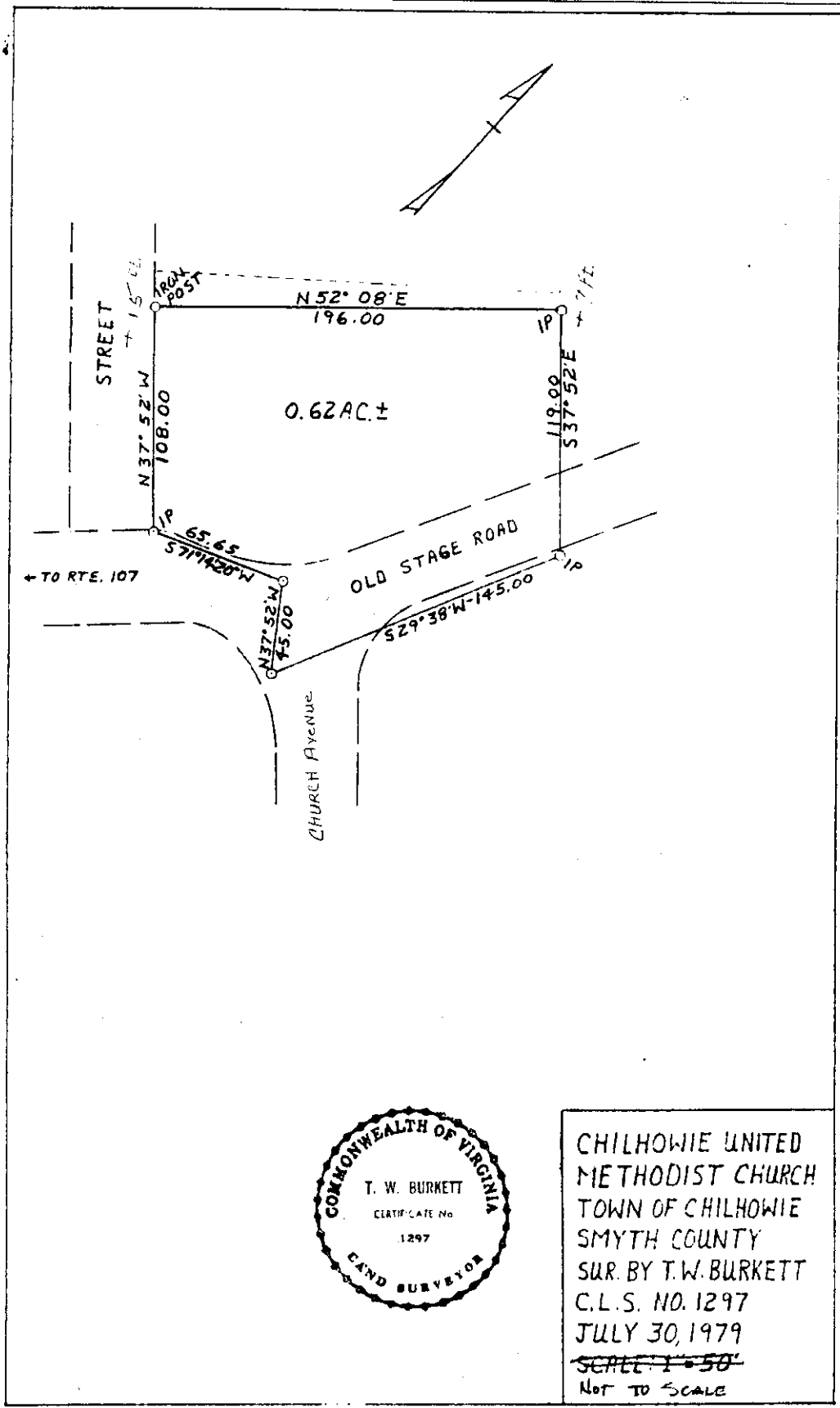
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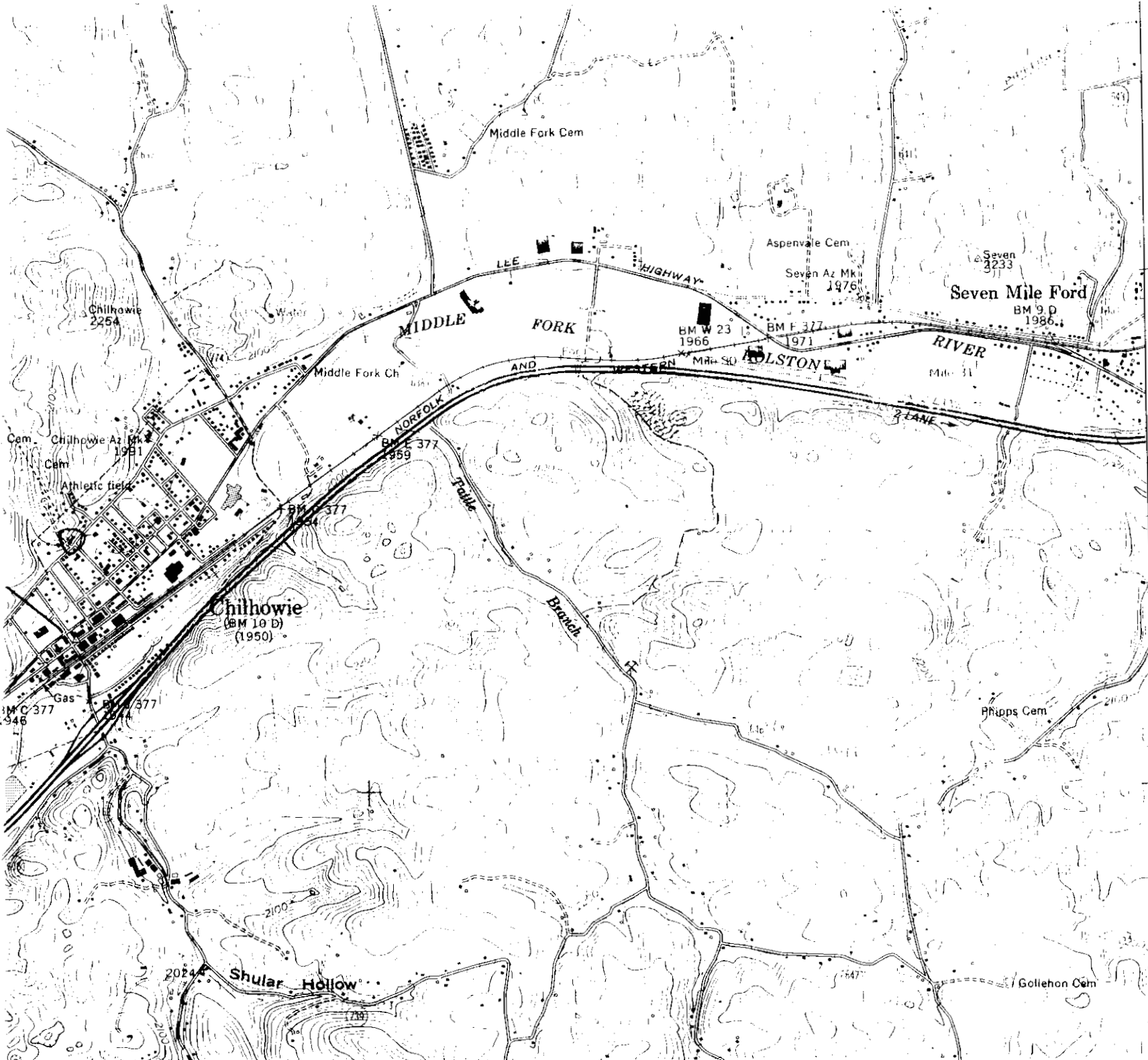
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in the charge of one pastor, the Reverend J. O. Staley. This arrangement continued until 1918 when church growth required the service of a full-time minister.

As automobiles replaced the horse and buggy, the front lawn gave way to the street which has been widened to the entrance steps. The original structure served in the form in which it was built for forty-three years before the first expansion. With the two-story rear addition in 1935 and the east wing in 1959-60 many more activities were possible. There were youth fellowships, church-sponsored scout troops, Red Cross blood drives, and meetings of civic organizations. During the locally severe flooding of 1977 the church served as a refuge for many families.

Many hardy and fine pastors have guided the progress of this loyal congregation. Now with the leadership of the Reverend David T. St. Clair and a membership of 278, the church continues its active role in the community.





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46571 SE

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**CHILHOWIE
METHODIST**
4073 EPISCOPAL
CHURCH, CHILHOWIE
SMYTH CO., VA
DTM REFERENCE:
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47'30"

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