



2801 Kensington Avenue, Richmond, Virginia 23221; Telephone: (804) 367-2323; Fax: (804) 367-2391

PRELIMINARY INFORMATION FORM (PIF) for INDIVIDUAL PROPERTIES

The Preliminary Information Form (PIF) constitutes an application for preliminary consideration of a property for eligibility for the Virginia Landmarks Register and the National Register of Historic Places. The PIF is **not** the same as a nomination to the Registers, but is a means for evaluating the **eligibility** of a property for listing. The PIF is evaluated by Department of Historic Resources (DHR) staff and the State Review Board (SRB) based on information available at the time of preparation. Recommendations are subject to change if additional information becomes available. DHR and SRB recommendations regarding the property's eligibility will be provided to the property owner in writing.

Before Preparing a PIF

Contact **DHR's Archivist** for assistance in obtaining any information DHR may have on file about your property, such as a previous architectural survey record or eligibility evaluation. You are welcome to use this information in preparing your PIF. Contact **DHR's Archivist** by phone at (804) 482-6102, or by email at Quatro.Hubbard@dhr.virginia.gov.

Staff at one of DHR's three Regional offices also are available to answer questions you may have as you begin preparing your PIF. Locations and contact information for each office is at <https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/about-dhr/regional-preservation-offices/>. (You also are welcome to ask DHR's Archivist for the contact information.)

Preparing a PIF

A PIF consists of three equally important parts:

1. **Form:** Complete the attached form to the best of your ability, using your own research about the property to be evaluated as well as any information that DHR has provided. Remember that DHR's Regional staff also are available to assist you. The form may be completed using Microsoft Word software, typed, or hand-written. If using MS Word, send the electronic file via CD, email, ftp, or other file sharing means to **DHR's Archivist**.
Your PIF will not be evaluated if it is missing the property owner's signature and/or contact information for the person submitting the form (if different from the property owner)
2. **Photos:** Provide color digital images (JPGs are preferred) of your property's exterior and major interior spaces, with emphasis on architectural features instead of furnishings. Digital photos typically include views of the main building from all sides, as well as important ornamental and/or functional details; any outbuildings or secondary resources; and the property's general setting. Digital images can be submitted on CD, USB drive, or other file sharing means. Contact **DHR's Archivist** if you need assistance working with digital images. For further guidance on how to take photos, please refer to DHR's [Architectural Survey Guidelines](#).
3. **Maps:** A minimum of two maps must accompany your PIF.
 - **Location map:** This map shows the exact location of your property. The map can be created using Google Maps, Google Earth, Bing, or other mapping websites. A copy of a road map also may be used as long as the property's exact location and physical address are shown on the map. If you need assistance, **DHR's Archivist** can provide you an example of an acceptable location map that shows boundaries.
 - **Sketch map:** This map shows the locations of all resources on your property, such as the main building; any secondary resources (often referred to as outbuildings); major landscape features such as a stream, formal gardens, driveways, and parking areas, and the road on which the property fronts. The sketch map can be drawn by hand, or an annotated aerial view, tax parcel map or survey map may be used.

Submitting a PIF

Once you have completed the PIF, submit it to **DHR's Archivist** at the mailing address at the top of this page or via email at Quatro.Hubbard@dhr.virginia.gov. The PIF will be forwarded to the Regional staff member who will review your PIF and will answer any questions you may have about the evaluation process. Do not include materials for other DHR programs, such as easements or tax credits, with your PIF.

Note: All submitted materials become the property of DHR and will be retained in our permanent Archive. In addition, the materials will be posted on DHR's public website for a period of time during the evaluation process.

Thank you for taking the time to prepare and submit a Preliminary Information Form to DHR!



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DHR No. (to be completed by DHR staff) 011-5142

1. General Property Information

Property name: Gravel Hill Baptist Church & Cemetery

Property address: 792 Gravel Hill Rd (Rt. 676)

City or Town: Fincastle

Zip code: 24090

Name of the Independent City or County where the property is located: Botetourt County

Category of Property (choose only one of the following):

Building x Site Structure Object

2. Physical Aspects

Acreage: 0.931

Setting (choose only one of the following):

Urban Suburban Town Village Hamlet Rural x

Briefly describe the property's overall location and setting, including any notable landscape features:

Built on a prominence above Gravel Hill Road (Route 676) on the headwaters of Mill Creek in Botetourt County, the church stands on the north side of the road, less than a mile north(west) from US Hwy 11. A gravel driveway and parking area are located on the west side of the church. The church and cemetery were, until recently, surrounded by farmlands. Now many of the tracts are being developed for residential use. Parcel ID: 89-9.

3. Architectural Description

Architectural Style(s): Vernacular Gothic Revival

If the property was designed by an architect, landscape architect, engineer, or other professional, please list here: _____

If the builder is known, please list here: _____

Date of construction (can be approximate): ca. 1878

Narrative Description (Please do not exceed one page in describing the property):

Briefly describe the property's general characteristics, such as its current use (and historic use if different), as well as the primary building or structure on the property (such as a house, store, mill, factory, depot, bridge, etc.). Include the materials and method(s) of construction, physical appearance and condition (exterior and interior), and any additions or other major alterations.

The Gravel Hill Church is a weatherboarded frame structure on a parged fieldstone foundation, probably built between 1890 and 1900, and currently in fair condition (threatened by deterioration). It faces south toward Gravel Hill Road, and has a front-gable, fairly steeply pitched standing-seam metal roof, possibly the original roofing material, preserved by regular painting. The front elevation has an entrance vestibule, approached via a flight of seven poured-concrete stairs that probably date to the 1920s or 30s. The entrance has cheap replacement (plywood) folding doors without windows and the vestibule has boarded-up window openings on each side. Rising from the vestibule is a narrow bell tower topped with a belvedere with a pyramidal metal-covered roof. The gable end is accented by cornice returns. The side elevations have three bays of triangular-arched windows comprised of three separate wood sashes. The rear elevation has a front-gable rear addition.

The simple nave plan, one-bay church is rectangular in shape with a moderately-pitched front-gabled roof clad in standing seam metal with return cornice. A pyramidal-roofed bell tower rises above the front gable. Weatherboard clads the exterior of the church, and a stuccoed stone foundation supports it. A separate front gable with standing seam metal is attached to the façade, and houses a double-leaf wood door entrance. An external brick flue is located on the east elevation. Two-over-two wood sash windows with a triangular pediment with two lights light the east and west elevations. The stone entrance steps, which have been painted black, are original to the church. An extension of the rear elevation is possibly a later addition; it is covered with weatherboard, has a gabled standing seam metal roof, and is supported by a brick foundation.

Although well-maintained until a few years ago, the church building has deteriorated since, and owing in part to a leaking roof, is now in poor-fair condition. Undoubtedly, it can be repaired and preserved.

Secondary Resources

- Outhouse privy, ca. 1940
The outhouse is a concrete block building sited about 100 feet north, downslope, to the rear of the church. The block masonry remains sound, but the roof and doors have deteriorated badly. The building incorporates two stalls with one seat each.
- Cemetery established by the 1890s
The church cemetery is located mainly to the north, beginning immediately behind the church, but a few graves flank the rear portion of the church edifice. The topography of the cemetery slopes downward from the church, steeply to the east and west, and more gently to the north. Many graves are unmarked. At least one has a concrete-slab headstone tablet, smooth on both sides, unpainted, and lacking any inscriptions or lettering of any kind. Some grave markers lie flat; at least one of them is partially buried, obscuring the text.

The latest inventory of the cemetery was done in 2015 by a local Boy Scouts troop. During inventories, 57 verified unmarked graves and only a few markers were identified. The family names include Thomas, Bagby, Girty, Callaway, Coleman, Wallace, Wiley, Wright, Thompson, Taylor, and several others.

Those buried in the cemetery include:

- Sherman Bagby, who died in 1941.
- Osborn Timothy Jackson was born on August 9, 1898. He died on November 5, 1977. Osborn was the son of Lee Royal Jackson and Carrie Corbett.
- Uriah Coleman was born January 20, 1859. He died on March 14, 1932.
- Carrie Corbett died at age 92 on March 4, 1966.
- Marvin Laphern Craighead was born on March 8, 1928. He died on February 25, 1951. He was the son of Arthur E. Craighead and Odessa Howard.
- Sherman C. Wiley was born on April 1, 1891. He died on February 7, 1953. He was the husband of Mary Martin and son of Ashby Wiley and Kathleen Johnson.
- James W. Thomas was born December 14, 1873. He died on September 25, 1951. He was the husband of Oakley Johnson and was the son of David Thomas and Elizabeth Hackley.
- Ora Blanche Dennis died on June 4, 1966.
- Charles Douglas was born December 10, 1855. He died on December 10, 1923.
- Florence Douglas died at age 74 on May 7, 1966.
- Audrey A. Perdue was born on August 26, 1930. She died on August 27, 1931.
- David Rhodes was born on March 15, 1860. He died on August 24, 1917.
- Ambrose C. Thomas was born on July 15, 1868. He died on September 20, 1938.
- Jesse Wallace was born on October 14, 1886. He died January 24, 1913.
- Ora Wallace was born on August 5, 1892. She died on June 5, 1928. She was the daughter of Tom Mays and Darah Toliver.
- Hogan McKinley Wallace died on June 11, 1915.
- Russell Wright was born on 1903. He died on November 21, 1936.
- Minnie F. Brown died in January of 1922 at the age of 29. She was the daughter of Annie Douglas. She was married to George W. Brown.
- Henry Brown was born in 1885 and died in 1957. Henry has a standing marker.
- Ann Burnett was born about 1793. She died in 1898 at age 105. Ann has a standing marker, and is believed to be the first burial in this cemetery.

4. Property's History and Significance (Please do not exceed one page)

Briefly explain the property's historic importance, such as significant events, persons, and/or families associated with the property.

If the property is important for its architecture, engineering, landscape architecture, or other aspects of design, please include a brief explanation of this aspect.

Gravel Hill Baptist Church has not seen regular use since 1974, but for nearly a century it served a community of African Americans who settled along Gravel Hill Road after the Civil War and erected the building using vernacular design and construction techniques, and inexpensive materials. According to the original 1876 deed, it was intended for use both as a school and a church. The church and cemetery, collectively, appear to be eligible under Criterion A in the areas of Education, Ethnic History: Black, and Social History.

GRAVEL HILL BAPTIST CHURCH AND CEMETERY BRIEF HISTORY (2015, unpublished)

IN THE 1870'S SEVERAL AFRICAN AMERICAN FAMILIES OF THE SURROUNDING AREA CAME TOGETHER TO FORM THIS CHURCH. ON MARCH 24, 1876, A MAN NAMED ISAAC KESSLER AND HIS WIFE ELIZABETH KESSLER. ISAAC AND HIS WIFE, DEEDED THE LAND THAT THIS CHURCH AND CEMETERY SIT ON TO THE TRUSTEES OF AMSTERDAM SCHOOL DISTRICT. THE LAND WAS TO BE USED BY THEM AS A SCHOOL AND HOUSE OF RELIGIOUS WORSHIP.

AS THE YEARS PASSED, TRUSTEES OF THE AMSTERDAM SCHOOL DISTRICT DECIDED TO CONVEY THE LAND TO THE TRUSTEE OF THE GRAVEL HILL BAPTIST CHURCH BY THE NAME OF URIALI COLEMAN. COLEMAN NEVER HAD THE DEED RECORDED BEFORE IT WAS BURNED IN A FIRE THAT DESTROYED HIS HOME. SO, ON SEPTEMBER 12, 1913, A LEAD DEED WAS OFFICALLY RECORDED TO THE TRUSTEES OF GRAVEL HILL BAPTIST CHURCH WHO CONSISTED OF URAIH COLEMAN, DAVID THOMAS, JOHN GIRTY.

IN THE LATER PART OF JULY 1946, THE CHURCH WAS FORMALLY DEDICATED LAND AND A NEW CORNERSTONE LAID WITH 1946 ORGANIZATIONAL DATE AND THE 1946 DEDICATION DATE INSCRIBED. LATER 1957, THE CHURCH WOULD ALSO BUY MORE SURROUNDING LAND FAR NORTHEASTERN CORNER OF THE CEMETERY. THE CEMETERY SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN ESTABLISHED SOON AFTER MR. KESSLER DEEDED THE LAND TO THE AMSTERDAM SCHOOL DISTRICT AND GRAVEL HILL BAPTIST CHURCH.

SOME GRAVES EVEN DATE BACK AS FAR AS THE 1890'S. THE GRAVES IN THIS CEMETERY MOSTLY CONSIST OF THE MEMBERS OF FAMILIES IN THE CHUCH. SEVERAL GRAVES THAT ARE UNIDENTIFIED AND POSSIBLY COME FROM OUT OF STATE. PROMINENT FAMILY'S NAMES SUCH AS THOMAS'S, BAGBY'S, GIRTY'S, CALLOWAY'S, WRIGHT'S, ROBINSON'S, BROWN'S, AND CRAIGHEAD'S ARE BURIED HERE ON THE PROPERTY.

THE CEMETERY CONTAINS MANY SPECIAL GRAVES SUCH AS ANN BURNETT, WHO IS BELIEVED TO HAVE LIVED TO BE 105 YEARS OLD AND PUTTING HER BIRTH DATE IN 1793. ALSO, MARY TANNER WHO LIVED TO BE ONLY 13 YEARS OLD. THE CEMETERY ALSO CONTAINS THREE WORLD WAR II VETERANS, LEWIS WRIGHT (US ARMY), MARVIN L CRAIGHEAD (US NAVY), LEWIS BAGBY (US ARMY). ONLY A FEW PASTORS WERE REGULAR PREACHERS AT THE CHURCH. REV THOMAS WASHINGTON (ONE OF THE FEW PAST PASTORS),

WHO BAPTIZED EDITH CRAIGHEAD IN 1933 WHEN SHE WAS 13 YEARS OLD. REV JAMES SPARROW (LONGEST TERM PASTOR) WHO BECAME ILL AND DIED IN 1974.

IN THE LATE 1970'S TO THE EARLY 80'S, REV JOE ADKINS PREACHED AT GRAVEL HILL (WHILE RENTING) FOR SEVERAL YEARS AND THE CHURCH HAVEN'T HAD A REGULAR PASTOR/SERVICE SINCE. THE FOLLOWING YEARS, THE CHURCH HAS BEEN RENTED TO OTHER CHURCHES SO THEY CAN FELLOWSHIP (WHITE AND BLACK). EDITH CRAIGHEAD WAS THE LAST MEMBER/PERSON TO CONDUCT SERVICES AT THE CHURCH. EDITH ATTENDED THE CHURCH SINCE SHE WAS A CHILD. SHE WAS THE PAST CLERK, TREASURER, PIANO PLAYER AND AMONG OTHER TITLES. EDITH WAS THE HEAD TRUSTEE OF THE CHURCH, UNTIL BECOMING ILL AND PASSED AWAY ON APRIL 23, 2017.

THE CHURCH PRESENTLY HAS THREE LIVING MEMBERS, THE CHILDREN OF EDITH CRAIGHEAD (SHIRLEY WILEY, JAMES CRAIGHEAD) AND ONE BROTHER WILLIAM GIRTY WHO WAS BAPTIZED AT GRAVEL HILL. WILLIAM LATER MOVED TO THE NORTH AND JOINED ANOTHER CHURCH WHILE KEEPING GRAVEL HILL HIS MAIN CHURCH. EDITH'S TWO CHILDREN LIVE LOCALLY AND VISIT THE CHURCH PERIODICALLY.

- Brief history of the church and cemetery compiled by local Boy Scouts in 2015.
- “Forgotten Cemeteries: Gravel Hill Church Cemetery” *Fincastle Herald*, April 14, 2020.
- VCRIS entries, 2006 and 2008.
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Please list all sources of information used to research the history of the property, such as deeds, census and tax records, and/or published articles and books. (It is not necessary to attach lengthy articles or family genealogies to this form.)

5. Property Ownership (Check as many categories as apply):

Private: ☒ Public\Local _____ Public\State _____ Public\Federal _____

Current Legal Owner(s) of the Property (If the property has more than one owner, please list each below or on an additional sheet.)

name/title: TODD WILLEY
organization: _____
street & number: 75 CRAIGHEAD DR
city or town: TROUTVILLE state: VA zip code: 24125
e-mail: TEG9196@YAHOO.COM telephone: 540-529-8393

Legal Owner's Signature: [Signature]
Date: 10-18-23

•• Signature required for processing all applications. ••

In the event of corporate ownership you must provide the name and title of the appropriate contact person.

Contact person: N/A
Daytime Telephone: _____

Applicant Information (Individual completing form if other than legal owner of property)

name/title: _____
organization: _____
street & number: _____
city or town: _____ state: _____ zip code: _____
e-mail: _____ telephone: _____
Date: _____

PLEASE DO NOT ATTACH CONTINUATION SHEETS TO THIS FORM. THANK YOU!



1500 ft





62.5 ft





011-5142_Gravel_Hill_Church_2023_looking_N-NE



011-5142_Gravel_Hill_Church_2023_looking_N



011-5142_Gravel_Hill_Church_2023_looking_NW



011-5142_Gravel_Hill_Church_2023_east_windows



011-5142_Gravel_Hill_Church_2023_looking_S_alt



011-5142_Gravel_Hill_Church_2023_looking_S



011-5142_Gravel_Hill_Church_2023_looking_NE



011-5142_Gravel_Hill_Church_2023_interior_



011-5142_Gravel_Hill_Church_2023_interior_front_room



011-5142_Gravel_Hill_Church_2023_interior_front_room_alt



011-5142_Gravel_Hill_Church_2023_interior_facing_front



011-5142_Gravel_Hill_Church_2023_interior_front_door_transom



011-5142_Gravel_Hill_Church_2023_interior_facing_rear



011-5142_Gravel_Hill_Church_2023_interior_facing_rear_alt



011-5142_Gravel_Hill_Church_2023_interior_ceiling



011-5142_Gravel_Hill_Church_2023_interior_ceiling_detail_alt



011-5142_Gravel_Hill_Church_2023_interior_ceiling_detail_alt2



011-5142_Gravel_Hill_Church_2023_interior_E_wall



011-5142_Gravel_Hill_Church_2023_interior_pews



011-5142_Gravel_Hill_Church_2023_interior_SE_corner



011-5142_Gravel_Hill_Church_2023_interior_rear_room



011-5142_Gravel_Hill_Church_2023_looking_SE



011-5142_Gravel_Hill_Church_2023_looking_W-NW



011-5142_Gravel_Hill_Church_2023_west_windows



011-5142_Gravel_Hill_Church_2023_outhouse_looking_N-NE



011-5142_Gravel_Hill_Church_2023_outhouse_looking_E



011-5142_Gravel_Hill_Church_2023_cem_looking_N-NE



011-5142_Gravel_Hill_Church_2023_cem_looking_N



011-5142_Gravel_Hill_Church_2023_cem_looking_NE



011-5142_Gravel_Hill_Church_2023_cem_looking_S-alt1



011-5142_Gravel_Hill_Church_2023_cem_Bagby_graves



011-5142_Gravel_Hill_Church_2023_cem_blank_marker



011-5142_Gravel_Hill_Church_2023_cem_blank_marker_reverse



011-5142_Gravel_Hill_Church_2023_cem_ChesterG.Brown



011-5142_Gravel_Hill_Church_2023_cem_Girty_grave



011-5142_Gravel_Hill_Church_2023_cem_HenryBrown



011-5142_Gravel_Hill_Church_2023_cem_JamesGirty



MARVIN L. CRAIGHEAD
MARYLAND
PVT 3396 TRUCK CO TC
WORLD WAR II
MARCH 8 1927 FEB 23 1951

011-5142_Gravel_Hill_Church_2023_cem_MarvinCraighead



011-5142_Gravel_Hill_Church_2023_cem_north-end_graves



011-5142_Gravel_Hill_Church_2023_cem_unknown_graves