

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE:	West Virginia
COUNTY:	Upshur
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY DATE	

1. NAME	
COMMON:	French Creek Presbyterian Church
AND/OR HISTORIC:	

2. LOCATION			
STREET AND NUMBER: Route 2			
CITY OR TOWN: French Creek		CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT: Second	
STATE: West Virginia	CODE 54	COUNTY: Upshur	CODE 097

3. CLASSIFICATION			
CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
☐ District ☐ Site ☐ Object	☐ Public ☒ Private ☐ Both	☒ Occupied ☐ Unoccupied ☐ Preservation work in progress	Yes: ☒ Restricted ☐ Unrestricted ☐ No
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
☐ Agricultural ☐ Commercial ☐ Educational ☐ Entertainment	☐ Government ☐ Industrial ☐ Military ☐ Museum	☐ Park ☐ Private Residence ☒ Religious ☐ Scientific	☐ Transportation ☐ Other (Specify) _____ _____ _____ ☐ Comments _____

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY			
OWNER'S NAME: French Creek Presbyterian Church			
STREET AND NUMBER: Route 2			
CITY OR TOWN: French Creek		STATE: West Virginia	CODE 54

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION			
COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.: Upshur County Courthouse			
STREET AND NUMBER: Main Street			
CITY OR TOWN: Buckhannon		STATE: West Virginia	CODE 54

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS			
TITLE OF SURVEY: _____			
DATE OF SURVEY: _____ ☐ Federal ☐ State ☐ County ☒ Local			
DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS: _____			
STREET AND NUMBER: _____			
CITY OR TOWN: _____		STATE: _____	CODE _____

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

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7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	☒ Excellent	☐ Good	☐ Fair	☐ Deteriorated	☐ Ruins	☐ Unexposed
	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	☒ Altered	☐ Unaltered	☐ Moved	☒ Original Site		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The first French Creek Presbyterian Church building was erected in 1823 or 1824 of logs on a site just in front of the present structure. This served the congregation until a new frame church was constructed in 1851. During the Civil War, a party of Union soldiers, using the building as protection against inclement weather, accidentally set it on fire, and the congregation had to wait until hostilities ended before Lieutenant Watson Buntin could complete the task of raising the present structure. Little change has been made since, but general repairs and painting took place in 1915 after the United States government finally reimbursed the congregation for the building destroyed more than fifty years before. In the mid-1950s an addition was made to the northwest side to house Sunday School rooms.

Built on a stone foundation, the present church can best be described as being a simple frame building with a white weatherboard exterior. The central portion is that constructed in 1866, and it is a one room, rectangular unit, 50' x 40' in size. The plain lines are broken by four unadorned windows on each side (all 4/2 double-hung sash) and two symmetrically placed entrance doors on the south elevation of the gable-roofed building. Above each door is a four-sectioned overlight. The belfry, which houses a bell purchased in 1891, follows the general lines of the church, but its roof is slightly arched rather than gabled. The 1950s addition is quite similar in style to the older section and architecturally blends with its surroundings.

The interior of the central unit has a high ceiling and white oak floor. The clear glass windows have frames hewn from tulip poplar timbers cut in the area, as was all lumber used in the original. With federal funds received as settlement for destruction of the old church, the congregation replaced the old, straight-backed pews, which had been used since 1866, with new wooden seats.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

8. SIGNIFICANCE			
PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
☐ Pre-Columbian	☐ 16th Century	☐ 18th Century	☐ 20th Century
☐ 15th Century	☐ 17th Century	☒ 19th Century	
SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) 1866			
AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
☐ Aboriginal	☒ Education	☐ Political	☐ Urban Planning
☐ Prehistoric	☐ Engineering	☒ Religion/Philosophy	☐ Other (Specify)
☐ Historic	☐ Industry	☐ Science	
☐ Agriculture	☐ Invention	☐ Sculpture	
☒ Architecture	☐ Landscape Architecture	☒ Social/Humanitarian	
☐ Art	☐ Literature	☐ Theater	
☐ Commerce	☐ Military	☐ Transportation	
☐ Communications	☐ Music		
☐ Conservation			
STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE			
The French Creek Presbyterian Church is typical of the plain, functional, one-room church structures which have served small agricultural communities for over one hundred years. The congregation has been the generator of educational achievement and social/humanitarian works not only in its immediate locale but throughout West Virginia. During the early years of the 19th century, a number of New England families from Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Vermont, influenced largely by the extraordinarily cold summers which afflicted New England during the period, immigrated to what was then Monongalia County, Virginia, now Upshur County, West Virginia. These emigrants were members of the Congregational Church, and to care for their spiritual and physical needs, the Hampshire County, Massachusetts, Missionary Society in 1816 commissioned Rev. Asa Brooks, a graduate of Williams College, as a missionary minister to the new settlement. With him came his brother, Amos Brooks, a physician. Church services were held for a time in local homes, but in 1819, the French Creek Presbyterian Church was organized; its affiliation with Presbyterianism being due to the fact that there were no Congregational churches in the area. (The nearest Presbyterian organization was at Redstone, Pennsylvania, about 125 miles away.) A log structure was built in 1823 or 1824 to house the congregation on a permanent base, and the ground on which it was constructed serves to this day as the location of the church. The present building typifies the evolution of frontier community churches in small agricultural towns which have continued to maintain the rustic atmosphere of their background. From rough log construction to the one-room frame structure of today, the French Creek Presbyterian Church epitomizes the simple lines of back country architecture. These New England settlers in Virginia brought with them many of the ideas and customs of their puritan ancestors. They believed in public education for all, they demanded an educated ministry, and they profoundly opposed the human slavery which they found in Virginia. One of their early acts was the assurance of a new minister to replace, when necessary, the Reverend Asa Brooks. A young man by the name of Loyal Young was selected. The women made his clothing while the men dug ginseng, one of the area's few cash crops. With funds provided from the sale of ginseng, Loyal Young walked 150 miles to the nearest Presbyterian college at Cannonsburg, Pennsylvania. Later he returned for two periods of ministry at the French Creek Church. Local grain growers had solved the problem of expensive transportation of grain to market by distilling it into whiskey. This distillation became of prime importance to the local economy, but making and using alcoholic beverages affronted the principles of some of the New England settlers.			

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Cutright, W.B., History of Upshur County, West Virginia. Buckhannon, W.Va. (?), 1907 (?). (pp. 255, 268-69, 400)
Memorial booklets issued to mark the 100th, 125th, and 150th anniversaries of the French Creek Presbyterian Church, Leonard Memorial Library, Buckhannon, West Virginia.
Pinnell, Lois M., The French Creek Presbyterian Church. Parsons, W.Va.: McClain Printing Company, 1971.

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			O R	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds		Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds
NW	0 . .	0 . .		38° 53 . 06 .	80 .	18 . 06.9
NE	0 . .	0 . .				
SE	0 . .	0 . .				
SW	0 . .	0 . .				

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: $\frac{1}{2}$ acre

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE: James E. Harding, Research Analyst and Mrs. Lois M. Pinell, Historian, French Creek Presbyterian Church	
ORGANIZATION West Virginia Antiquities Commission	DATE June 11, 1974
STREET AND NUMBER: Old Mountainlair--West Virginia University	
CITY OR TOWN: Morgantown	STATE West Virginia
	CODE 54

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

As the designated State Liaison Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National ☐ State ☒ Local ☐

Name

Leonard M. Davis

Title

State Historic Preservation Officer

Date

June 28, 1974

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

Director, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date

ATTEST:

Keeper of The National Register

Date

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

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(Continuation Sheet)

STATE West Virginia	
COUNTY Upshur	
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ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

(Number all entries)

8. SIGNIFICANCE (Continued)

In 1828, they organized a total abstinence society with thirty-two members, certainly the first such organization in the area and probably one of the first in Western Virginia.

Opposing as they did human slavery, in 1831 they organized an Abolitionist Society, the first such organization in Virginia and one of the earliest south of the Mason and Dixon Line.

When the Civil War came, people of the French Creek area gave full and enthusiastic support to the Union; every young man from the Presbyterian Church congregation who went into military service enlisted in the Union army. Local people gave full support to the formation of the new state of West Virginia which was admitted to the Union on June 20, 1863.

These New Englanders brought with them the appreciation for higher education as provided by grammar schools and academies in their former homeland. In 1868, Loyal Young called upon the congregation to organize a school of "higher learning." As a result the French Creek Institute was opened with each of its directors a member of the French Creek Church. Its purpose was to teach grammar, mathematics, Latin, and other subjects not provided by local public schools. It was an immediate success; from its doors went young men and women into the professions and to all walks of life. Two young men, Thomas E. Hodges and Robert A. Armstrong, who attended school at the Institute, later became presidents of West Virginia University.

With the missionary spirit of their sponsors in Massachusetts, the congregation has sent out many of its sons and daughters as missionaries. The most notable, perhaps, was Dr. Samuel Hall Young, son of Dr. Loyal Young. Hall Young became one of the earliest Presbyterian missionaries commissioned to Alaska, where he served for over 30 years. He took part in the Klondike gold rush, and he became a friend and companion of the naturalist, John Muir. Young wrote and had published Alaska Days with John Muir, Alaskan Adventure Stories, and Hall Young of Alaska.

The French Creek Presbyterian Church continues after more than 150 years as an active church body. To the long list of its illustrious members may be added Alonzo Beecher Brooks, former West Virginia state forester who laid the foundation of the state's French Creek Game Farm. A.B. Brooks was a scholar, teacher, lecturer and writer who served as an inspiration to children interested in nature study. In this area stands his accomplishments in the establishment of the Nature Leader's Training School at Wheeling, West Virginia's, Oglebay Park.

The French Creek Presbyterian Church has been an inspiration to many a well-known man and woman. The plain house of worship is simple only in lines; its achievements in such fields as education and missionary work stand out as a tribute to its dignified posture.

PROPERTY MAP FORM

(Type all entries - attach to or enclose with map)

Upshur

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ENTRY NUMBER

DATE

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

1. NAME

COMMON: French Creek Presbyterian Church

AND/OR HISTORIC:

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:

Route 2

CITY OR TOWN:

French Creek

STATE:

West Virginia

CODE

54

COUNTY:

Upshur

CODE

097

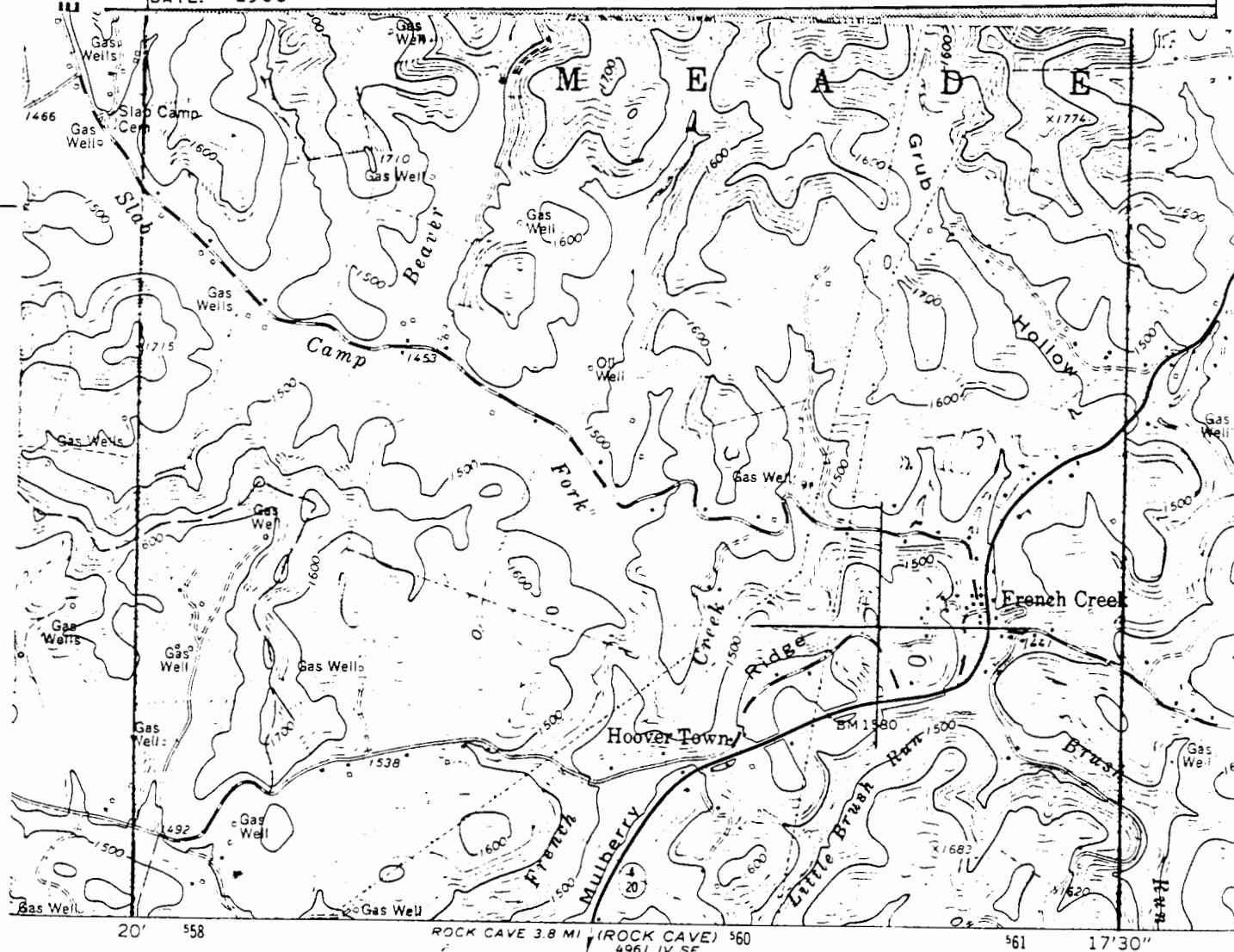
3. MAP REFERENCE

SOURCE:

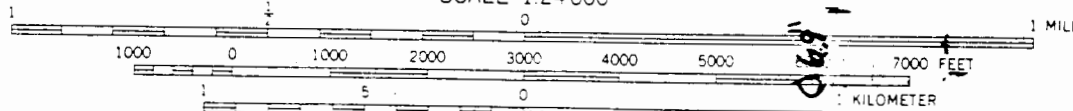
United States Geological Survey, Adrian, W.Va., 7.5' Quadrangle

SCALE: 1:24000

DATE: 1966



SCALE 1:24000

CONTOUR INTERVAL 20 FEET
DATUM IS MEAN SEA LEVEL26'
41LSMAGNETIC NORTH
OF SHEET

THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS

800 181 008

