

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

## 1. Name of Property

historic name Buffalo Church

other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_

## 2. Location

street & number Intersection of County Routes 28 and 14 over 12☐ not for publicationcity, town Palestine☒ vicinitystate West Virginiacode WVcounty Wirtcode 105zip code 26160

## 3. Classification

## Ownership of Property

- ☒ private  
☐ public-local  
☐ public-State  
☐ public-Federal

## Category of Property

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

## Number of Resources within Property

## Contributing

## Noncontributing

31    4   buildings   sites   structures   objects0 Total

Name of related multiple property listing:

N/ANumber of contributing resources previously  
listed in the National Register 0

## 4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this  
☒ 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 ☒ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. ☐ See continuation sheet.

Signature of certifying official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. ☐ See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

## 5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

☐ entered in the National Register.☐ See continuation sheet.☐ determined eligible for the National  
Register. ☐ See continuation sheet.☐ determined not eligible for the  
National Register.☐ removed from the National Register.☐ other, (explain:) \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

**6. Function or Use**

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Education/Religion

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Vacant/Occasional Ceremony**7. Description**Architectural Classification  
(enter categories from instructions)Other: log architecture

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Stone piers (block infill)walls Log with weather board outsideWood boards insideroof Metal

other \_\_\_\_\_

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Buffalo Church is a one-story oblong log structure with exterior weatherboarding of beech wood and interior finish of wood boards on walls and ceiling installed with long dimension of the building. The wood is painted white inside and outside. The original log structure was chinked with wood strips and daubed with clay mortar.

There are two entrance doors in the north elevation of the building and three bays of 2-over-2 single-hung windows along each side. There are no openings in the south end. The roof design is a common gable with a metal covering. There is a small square bell tower with metal roof and rectangular louvered openings in each side of the tower.

The original foundation consisted of stone piers placed at each corner of the building, with two intermediate piers along each side and center piers at each end. At this time there is a concrete block infill between piers, except for an access panel in the west foundation. Except for a concrete and masonry entrance stoop and steps, and vinyl siding material on the bell tower (which is soon to be removed), the building presents essentially the same appearance as in late 1909, when the weatherboarding was first applied. The original entrance stoop was constructed of wood boards over log joists. A hewn log step was built for approach to each door.

The interior of the church has most of its original flooring, pulpit platform and pews. There are wall brackets along each side wall between windows to support oil lanterns and two iron hooks hung from the ceiling which also support oil lanterns. To this day there is no electrical service to the site, and no central heating system. It remains in its original primitive condition. Recent restoration work has been very carefully done and has retained all original fabric of integrity. The building is in exceptional condition.

☒ See continuation sheet

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The property on which the church building stands is one-half acre in size and also includes a fenced, well maintained cemetery, and three outbuildings which support the church and cemetery. Outbuildings consist of two pit toilets and a storage building, all dating from the mid-1930's. The buildings were constructed by workers associated with the depression-era WPA (Work Projects Administration).

The property is located in Wirt County, Reedy District, on Buffalo Ridge between the headwaters of Thorns Run and Falling Timber Run at a fork in the road at the intersection of county roads 28 and 14 over 12.

### 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

Late 19th. early 20th

centuries

1884-1935

Significant Dates

1884-1886

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Andrew McCoy and Matthew McClung

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

#### Summary

The Buffalo Church built in 1884-1886, is one of the very few extant examples of late nineteenth century log school/church structures in the state. It certainly is a very rare example in that it remains in its original primitive state - it has no electricity, running water or heating system. There are no utilities. Not only is there no modern comfort or convenience intrusion, nearly all the original fabric is intact, such as foundation stones, log members, weatherboarding, interior flooring, wall and ceiling coverings of wood boards, and original brackets and hooks for support of oil lamps. Ceiling openings and roof chimneys are extant where original free-standing iron stoves were placed for heating.

#### Historic Context

During the years 1800-1910 there were seventy deeds recorded for church buildings in Wirt County with most of the buildings constructed in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. There were two major reasons why so many churches were built in that period of time. The timber and lumber businesses were flourishing from 1880 to 1910, and the Wirt County population peaked in 1900. Thus schools and churches were built to meet the educational and spiritual needs of the expanding population.

Architecturally, the buildings were universally alike, regardless of creed or denomination. The buildings were built by local craftsmen, usually church members. As far as can be determined, they were not designed by architects or engineers. All churches had two entrance doors - women entered one door and sat on that side of the church; men used the other door and sat on that side; center pews were for older children and mixed couples. The early churches were built of logs with pitched, or gabled roofs. There were three or four windows along each side and no openings at the rear. Steeples, or bell towers, if any, were located on the roof, front center only.

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Buffalo Church architecturally fits, absolutely, the typical description of an early Wirt County school/church building. The most significant feature of this historic building is that it remains in its original, primitive condition.

History

The beginnings of Buffalo Church date to about 1878 when a subscription school was taught by Victoria Thomas. The school was located in an old log house which had an earth floor. Split logs were used for benches. This school was at the head of Falling Timber Run in what was known as Thorn's Run School District.

Since there was no Methodist church nearby, a few people began to hold prayer meetings in the old school building on Sunday afternoons. The prayer meeting became known as "The Falling Timber Methodist Class" and by the fall of 1882 a preacher named Rev. Thompson from Pisgah, on Right Reedy Creek at Twolick Run, preached at some of its meetings. When the class moved to the new Buffalo school building it changed its name and was taken into the Southern Methodist Conference under the name of Buffalo Class.

The original log structure of Buffalo Church was erected in the years 1884-1886. According to the memoirs of Mr. N.W. Thomas, recorded in 1951 when he was 85 years 3 months old, "we laid the foundation three times, raised the building two times, and threw it down once. With all these changes the people were agreeable." Between the years 1887 and 1891, Mr. Thomas said, "neighborhood folks hauled logs to the sawmill and got lumber sawed for a ceiling. Harvey Gough was hired to seal the walls and overhead."

"A few years later, Rev. Anvil came as pastor. This was when the logs were hauled to the sawmill and made into lumber for weatherboarding. Rufus Ashley was hired to weatherboard the church on the outside." This work was done soon after a photograph was made of the Buffalo Sunday School on September 12, 1909. A print of this photograph is part of this nomination. Mr. Thomas went on to report that in 1950 repairs were made to the church roof, bell tower, and foundation.

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The church and property were sold in January 1989 by the United Methodist Conference of West Virginia to the Buffalo Cemetery Board, Incorporated, a non-profit organization formed to protect and maintain the church building and cemetery.

## Period of Significance

The period of significance, 1884-1935, begins with the construction of Buffalo Church in 1884-86, and ends about 1935, when church activity and membership began to decline. The 1935 date also coincides with the Great Depression that witnessed the exodus of many farm families from the hills of rural Wirt County.

### 9. Major Bibliographical References

The Buffalo Cemetery Board, Incorporated. Dwight Brookover, Chairman, Rt. 1 Box 228 Parkersburg, West Virginia 26101, 1989.

#### Buffalo Church Sunday School Records.

Cochran, Mazie Sims. Sims Family History. Unpublished, May 1971.

The Elizabeth Beauchamp Chapter, Daughters of American Pioneers. Wirt County, West Virginia History. Taylor Publishing Company, Dallas, Texas 1981.

Hardesty, Hiram H. West Virginia Encyclopedia, Supplemental Series, 22cm V-6 p. 109-164. Edited and Published by Jim Comstock, Richwood, West Virginia 1974.

Memories of N.W. Thomas. Wirt County Journal, 1951.

Wirt County Deed Books. Deed Book 20, page 275. Book 183, pages 897-902.

☐ See continuation sheet

#### 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:

Buffalo Cemetery Board, Incorporated

### 10. Geographical Data

Acres of property Approximately one-half acre

#### UTM References

A 17 463500 4312900

Zone Easting Northing

C 17 463565 4312850

B 17 463510 4312840

Zone Easting Northing

D         

☐ See continuation sheet

#### Verbal Boundary Description

Beginning at a stake corner of lands owned by J.M. Lott and John Gates, thence S. 80' w. 6 poles to a stake; thence N.W. 7 poles and six feet to a chestnut oak by the side of the County road; thence with said road N.E. two poles to a stake; thence nearby East 2 poles to the Edmoresore road to a stake; thence with the same S.E. 10 poles to the place of beginning.

☐ See continuation sheet

#### Boundary Justification

The above boundary description is the same as when the property was conveyed by J.W. Gough and Mary A. Gough, his wife, to H.H. Miller, and others, as Trustees of the M.E. Church, by deed dated February 25, 1886. The deed was recorded in Wirt County Deed Book 20, page 275.

☐ See continuation sheet

### 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Paul D. Marshall, President

organization Paul D. Marshall & Associates, Inc.

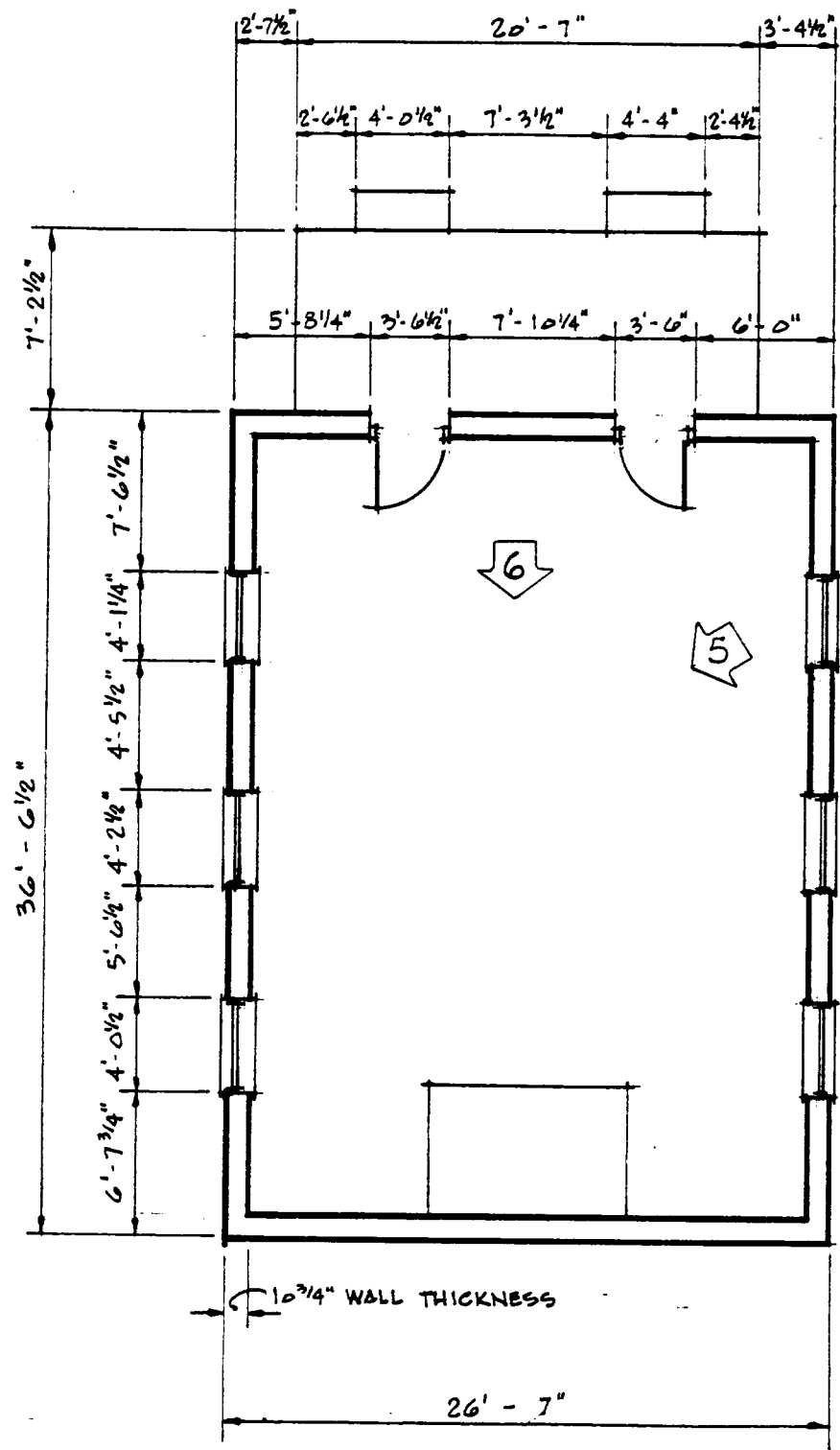
date April 24, 1989

street & number 915 Breezemont Drive

telephone (304) 343-5310

city or town Charleston

state West Virginia zip code 25302

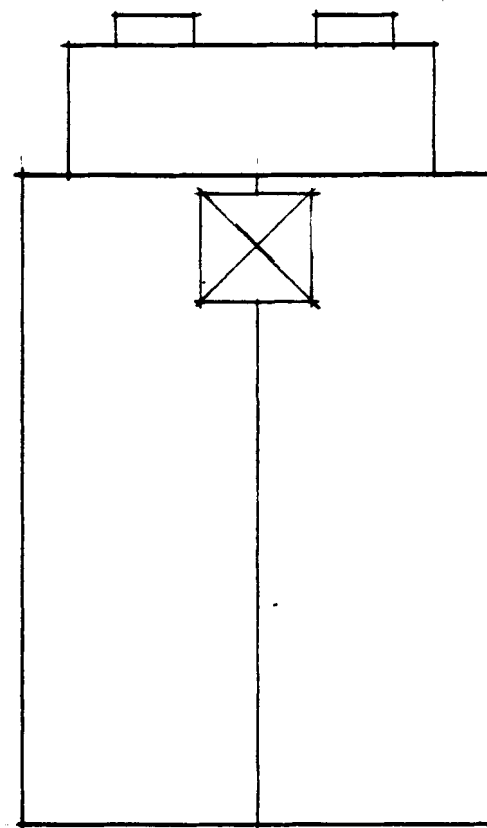


FLOOR PLAN

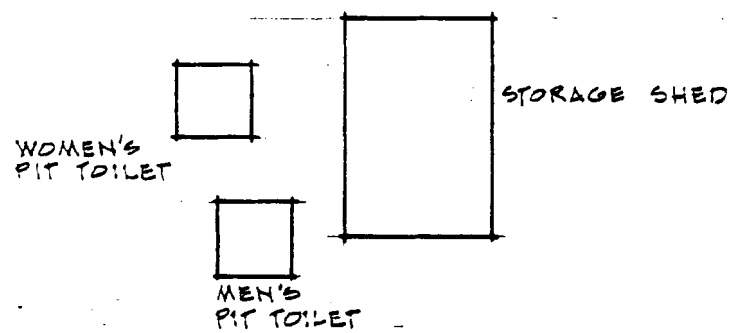
1/8" = 1'-0"

SEP 25 1989





BUFFALO CHURCH BUILDING



SEP 25 1989



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Photographs 1-6 are of the same site, taken by the same photographer on the same date and have a common location for original negatives.

1. Buffalo Church
2. Reedy District of Wirt County, West Virginia Intersection of County Routes 28 and 14 over 12.
3. Photographs 1-6, Paul D. Marshall, AIA
4. Photographs 1-6, November 20, 1988
5. Photographs 1-6, Paul D. Marshall & Associates, Inc.  
915 Breezemont Drive, Charleston, WV 25302

## Photograph No. 1

View of front and right side of Buffalo Church looking west. Photographer was standing at edge of County Route 28.

## Photograph No. 2

View of rear and left side of Buffalo Church looking north. Road at right of photograph is County Route 14 over 12. Photographer was standing near gate to cemetery.

## Photograph No. 3

View of cemetery behind Buffalo Church, looking south.

## Photograph No. 4

View of mountain vista from Buffalo Church looking west. Photographer was standing in left side of church yard.

## Photograph No. 5

Interior of Buffalo Church looking southeast.

## Photograph No. 6

Interior of Buffalo Church looking south.

## Photograph No. 7

Buffalo Church  
Reedy District, Wirt County, West Virginia  
Intersection of County Routes 28 and 14 over 12.  
Photographer unknown  
Late summer, 1909  
Negative owned by Buffalo Cemetery Board, Incorporated.  
The photograph is a historic photograph taken of the Buffalo Church Sunday School not long before the log structure was covered with weatherboarding. Photographer was facing south. This print was furnished by the owner of the property.

STATE OF WEST VIRGINIA  
REPRESENTED BY THE  
STATE OF WEST VIRGINIA GEOLOGICAL SURVEY  
AND OTHER STATE AGENCIES

