

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

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

1. NAME			
COMMON: John Wesley Methodist Church			
AND/OR HISTORIC: First Methodist Church			
2. LOCATION			
STREET AND NUMBER: East Foster (old German) Street			
CITY OR TOWN: Lewisburg		CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT: Second	
STATE: West Virginia	CODE 54	COUNTY: Greenbrier	CODE 025

3. CLASSIFICATION				
CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP		STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/> Object	<input type="checkbox"/> Public <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	Public Acquisition: <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress	Yes: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input type="checkbox"/> No
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)				
<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> Educational <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <input type="checkbox"/> Military <input type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Park <input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____ _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Comments _____ _____

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY			
OWNER'S NAME: Trustees of the John Wesley Methodist Church			
STREET AND NUMBER: East Foster Street			
CITY OR TOWN: Lewisburg		STATE: West Virginia	CODE 54

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION			
COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.: Greenbrier County Courthouse			
STREET AND NUMBER: Court and Randolph Streets			
CITY OR TOWN: Lewisburg		STATE: West Virginia	CODE 54

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS			
TITLE OF SURVEY: _____ _____			
DATE OF SURVEY: <input type="checkbox"/> Federal <input type="checkbox"/> State <input type="checkbox"/> County <input type="checkbox"/> Local			
DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS: _____ _____			
STREET AND NUMBER: _____ _____			
CITY OR TOWN: _____ _____		STATE: _____ _____	CODE _____ _____

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7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> Good	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input type="checkbox"/> Unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The John Wesley Church, earlier called the First Methodist Church, was constructed in 1820 of brick burned on the site. A rather "plain meeting-house"-type structure, its original dimensions were fifty-eight feet long by forty-seven feet wide. It is most probable that the builder was John Weir, architect and brickmason, who constructed most of the principal buildings in Lewisburg before 1830.

The building is two stories high to allow for a balcony. Windows are in two rows on the sides and front, but in the back two windows were placed about midway up the wall behind the pulpit to direct light from behind. A chimney was built into each wall inside the structure for the use of stoves, two in the balcony and two on the main floor, but a furnace system has been added within the past thirty years and these chimneys are no longer used.

A large, double-doored entrance at the front led directly into the sanctuary before 1835. To the left of these doors, on the exterior of the building, was a stairway to the "slave gallery." This balcony is very deep and extends around both sides and the front. The original twelve and fourteen inch wide floor boards and low, but substantial, railing still serve the balcony, and a few of the early benches are yet there. Ten very large boxed posts support this gallery.

The sanctuary is in very good repair, well lighted and comfortable. The old wide-boarded floor in the main section was, of necessity, covered by new oak flooring in more recent times. Window timbers, which are hand hewn, are deteriorating, and some outside sills are covered with metal for protection.

About the year 1835 an addition was made which extended the length of the church about ten feet toward the street to provide a vestibule for both the sanctuary and balcony. This addition made it possible to place the gallery stairs inside. Indications are that this new section was the work of John W. Dunn, Lewisburg's second noted architect and brickmason.

In outline the new front is in complete harmony with the older construction as to foundation, wall and roof, but beyond this point Mr. Dunn's work shows the influence of the "classic revival-Neo-Greek" period in its triple window, the "dogtoothed" eave cornices, the "eye brow" window and the door trim. The decorative gable escutcheon and the classic cupola are marks of the Greek revival which produced this unusual and lovely building.

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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) 1820, 1835

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

Aboriginal

☐ Prehistoric

☐ Historic

☐ Agriculture

☒ Architecture

☐ Art

☐ Commerce

☐ Communications

☐ Conservation

☐ Education

☐ Engineering

☐ Industry

☐ Invention

☐ Landscape

☐ Architecture

☐ Literature

☒ Military

☐ Music

☐ Political

☒ Religion/Phi-

losophy

☐ Science

☐ Sculpture

☐ Social/Human-

itarian

☐ Theater

☐ Transportation

☐ Urban Planning

☐ Other (Specify)

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Built in a "meetinghouse" style with Greek revival overtones, the John Wesley Methodist Church at Lewisburg, West Virginia, is one of the oldest brick churches in the state. Constructed under the supervision of the areas two best-known early architects and brickmasons--John Weir and John W. Dunn--and standing as tribute to frontier sophistication and growth, the structure has served the religious needs of many area residents since 1820. Its continuation as a center of worship has not been interrupted, but the building had to withstand division occasioned by the slavery question and suffered damage during a Civil War engagement.

Methodism came early to the Lewisburg area, for a society was organized there in 1788. Served by "circuit preachers," the group usually met in private homes. Sometime before 1800, this society was able to erect a stone church which it probably used until the present building was constructed in 1820 on two lots marked out by the original town survey of Lewisburg done in 1782 by Thomas Edgar.

It is an accepted probability that John Weir, early stone- and brick-mason and architect, built this "meetinghouse"-type church. He is credited with the planning and erection of the Old Brick Academy (1812), the McElhenney House (1813), the Withrow House (1818) and many other early homes in Greenbrier County.

In 1835 the structure was enlarged in order to provide a vestibule, an inside stairway and a study-office. This addition was the work of John W. Dunn, architect and brickmason, who was long the town's most noted house builder. In this building he brought Greek revival architecture to the "western waters" of Virginia. Even to this day the John Wesley Methodist Church remains one of the county's most stately structures.

When Methodism was rent in twain in the United States prior to the Civil War, the Lewisburg congregation which used this structure split. The Methodist Episcopal Church group continued to use the John Wesley building while the Methodist Episcopal Church South group moved to another place in town. After the Civil War, the two factions united again and constructed a new church, either selling or giving the older building to the freed Negroes who had previously worshipped in its gallery. The present membership has within its body grandchildren and great-grandchildren of former slaves who had been brought to the balcony for their souls' sake.

An interruption in routine again occurred in May of 1862, during the Battle of Lewisburg. The Confederate line of defense, during the engagement, was on the high ground on the eastern outskirts of the town, and the Union troops made their attack from the hills west of town. The church was in the line of fire from both directions and was struck by a cannon ball high on the southwest wall. This ball passed through the wall above the gallery,

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8. SIGNIFICANCE (Continued)

crossed to and went through the east wall under the balcony. Repairs to the wall are still evident. The oldest persons among the present membership have their grandparents' assurance that the shot was no accident. They believe that the church was being used either as an observation post or as part of the Confederate out-post. Old ammunition and shell cases have been found in the crawl space under the floor, and this gives some substance to the tradition. After the fighting ended, the structure was used to shelter the wounded from both sides.

The John Wesley Methodist Church, besides having interesting design and construction features, has witnessed the direct and indirect effects of war. The religious atmosphere boiled prior to the civil uprising of the mid-nineteenth century in the United States, and the congregation here felt its brunt in division among the church membership. To add to the complications of the day, battlefield action reached the structure in a ringing shot which penetrated its walls.

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Dayton, Ruth Woods. Greenbrier Pioneers and Their Homes. Charleston, W.Va.: West Virginia Publishing Co., 1942. (pp. 64-65)

. Lewisburg Landmarks. Charleston, W.Va.: Education Foundation, Inc., 1957. (p. 38)

Tuckwiller, Mrs. E.A. "Greenbrier Valley Centennial Churches," Journal of the Greenbrier Historical Society, II (No. 4, 1972), 22-24.

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	
NW	° ' "	° ' "		37° 47' 58"	80° 26' 41"	
NE	° ' "	° ' "				
SE	° ' "	° ' "		17/548800	4183000	
SW	° ' "	° ' "				

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:	
C.E. Turley, Field Agent and James E. Harding, Research Analyst	
ORGANIZATION	DATE
West Virginia Antiquities Commission	May 7, 1974
STREET AND NUMBER:	
Old Mountainlair, West Virginia University	
CITY OR TOWN:	STATE
Morgantown	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
Leonard M. Davis

Title State Historic Preservation Officer

Date May 10, 1974

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

Director, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date _____

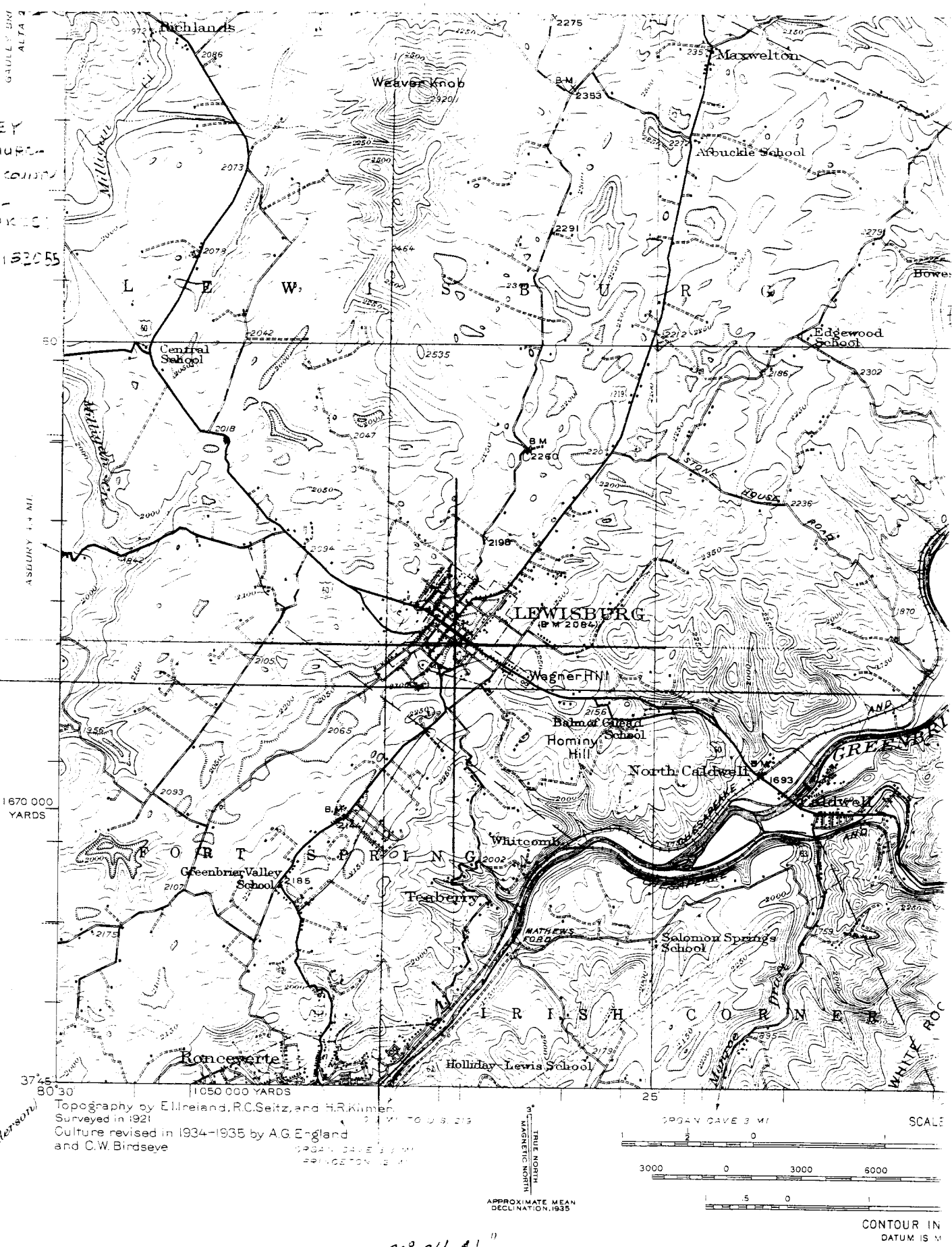
ATTEST:

Keeper of The National Register

Date _____

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

37° 47' 58" -



80° 26' 41"

THIS MAP IS AVAILABLE WITH OR
FOR SALE BY U.S. GEOLOGICAL
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MA

A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAP

Jah., Wesley Methodist Church
Lewisburg, W. Va.

