United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

See instructions in How to Complete National Register Forms
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic
Public Church

2. Location

street & number: Junction of Co. Rt. 34/1 and 34/2

state: West Virginia

city, town: Burning Springs

county: Wirt

code: 54

code: 105

congressional district: Third

3. Classification

Category
X building(s)
structure
site
object

Ownership
public
both
Public Acquisition
in process
being considered

Status
occupied
unoccupied
work in progress

Present Use
agriculture
commercial
educational
entertainment
religious

X: museum
X: park
X: private residence
X: scientific
X: transportation

X: educational
X: private residence
X: religious

X: entertainment
X: scientific

X: educational
X: private residence
X: religious

X: entertainment
X: scientific

X: educational
X: private residence
X: religious

X: entertainment
X: scientific

4. Owner of Property

name: French Robinson

state: West Virginia

city, town: Elizabeth

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc.: Wirt County Courthouse

state: West Virginia

city, town: Elizabeth

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title: has this property been determined eligible? yes X no

date: federal state county local

depository for survey records

state: West Virginia

city, town: Elizabeth

For HCRS use only
received date entered
7. Description

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Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Ruble Church (1854) is a rectangular, single-story, gable-roofed log structure measuring fifteen feet by twenty-five feet. The building stands in a clearing on a remote, forested hilltop (elevation 1045 ft.) in the Burning Springs vicinity of Wirt County, West Virginia.

Examination of early surviving photographs of the building indicate that only minor changes have affected the original fabric. Its well-preserved condition and recognition as a significant historic landmark in West Virginia suggest some measure of security for the Ruble Log Church. Nevertheless, while intermittent services held in the building by various nonsectarian users insure a small measure of upkeep, the edifice is empty throughout much of the year and must rely upon the assets of a sound roof and still plumb, heavy log walls for its future preservation.

Hewn logs, twelve to fifteen inches square, rise from stone supports in eight courses from sill to top log on each of the building's four sides. Notching of the jointed log walls is half-doveetailed and is fairly deep accounting for the rather tightly fitting logs. Chinking is composed of stone fragments, short split boards, and clay. Adz or broadaxe marks are still clearly discernible on all of the log surfaces.

Finishing or facing boards around the door and window openings are of relatively recent origin, while braced window shutters on each of the two windows per side appear to faithfully duplicate the originals. A rear wall window, shuttered like the others, provides light for the church pulpit, and is in line with the building's single doorway. The flush door is of laminated construction and is of very recent provenance.

The roof covering is of galvanized sheet metal with raised seams which replaced an original surface of sawn-split wooden shingles. Framed gables are sided with weatherboarding and enclose a low, unused loft. An early photograph shows the entrance elevation clad entirely in weatherboarding, a not uncommon feature of log buildings. A single facade was often so treated as an insulating factor against the frigid blast of prevailing winter winds.

The Ruble Log Church is in rather good condition, and appears on the exterior much as it looked following construction. Sill logs exhibit deterioration, however, and chinking material has disintegrated and fallen away from the building in many places.

Interior features of the building replaced rough, original surfaces which included "piececloth" windows and what has traditionally been referred to as log puncheon furniture. The tongue-and-groove board wainscoting, walls, ceiling, and pulpit are of uncertain date, though a period of construction of the early 20th or late 19th century seems very likely. The center aisle is flanked by plain benches with simple wooden backs, apparently of late manufacture. The gray-painted pulpit is positioned on a low dais and is flanked to the right by and old upright piano. Kerosene lamps attached to the walls and a pot-bellied stove still provide lighting and heating for the church.
The Ruble Church is significant because it exhibits the well-preserved craftsmanship of pre-Civil War hand log construction in an original rural West Virginia setting. The building is also significant because it was built as a philanthropic gesture by a locally prominent individual to serve the local religious and educational needs of a wilderness area in mid-19th century West Virginia.

The single-crib plan Ruble Church retains much of its original rustic integrity partly because it was never used as a domicile and therefore resisted the natural evolution of additions and alterations, and because its remote location made the importation of newer and more convenient building materials more difficult. The exception in this instance is the standing-seam sheet metal roof which became a nearly universal roofing medium for log building in the United States when highway construction in the 20th century permitted easy accessibility of the convenient material to builders. Solid, plumb walls and deep, half-lovelined notching attest to the skill of the builder who understood the nature and strengths of wood well enough to create a lasting structure. One of the best preserved log buildings in western West Virginia, and one of the area's oldest buildings still in public use, the church is viewed as a significant historical landmark by the populace of Wirt County.

A Burning Springs native and a later resident of Williamson, West Virginia, Dr. J.K. Roberts, wrote a brief history of Burning Springs in which the following story was related:

"Sometime prior to the Civil War, when Burning Springs was still a wilderness, Aaron S. Ruble, a very pious and good man, feeling the need of a place of worship had, through his influence, a log church built. It was named the Ruble Church after its founder and is still known by that name."

The log church was constructed by area settlers who were assisted, it was reported, by Aaron Ruble's two daughters. The land for the church was given by landowner William Petty in an official transaction before Aaron Ruble who was then a Wirt County justice of the peace. The deed, recorded November 20, 1854, specified that the site was to be used for a church, and that the church was to be available as a place of worship to all denominations. Regarding this matter, Robert's history reported: The old deed for the site of the Ruble Church plainly stipulated that the land was to be used for a church to house the worship of God by all congregations, except the northern Methodists. The discord over Northern-Southern sympathies in Protestant denominations prior to the Civil War is here vividly and rather amazingly evident.

1 The deed actually records that the church was free to all but those of "Northern Principles".
Surrounding the church immediately to the north and west is a cemetery, the oldest graves of which appear to date from the 1857-58 period. Weeds and other low vegetation have obscured the small, weathered markers.
During the early years the Ruble Log Church also served as a school. Among the teachers were David Roberts, Zachariah Hickman and John R. Pell. The importance of the building, which was only several ridges away from one of the nation's earliest oil and gas producing fields of the 19th century, was emphasized by its siting on a mountain top at the forks of several unimproved roads serving scattered settlers.
9. Major Bibliographical References


10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property \( \frac{1}{4} \) acre

Quadrangle name: Girra, WV

Quadrangle scale: 1:24,000

UTM References

A

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Verbal boundary description and justification

Centered on a parcel bounded on the south by the edge of Co. Rt. 34/1, on the east by the edge Co. Rt. 34/2, and by the outermost edge of a cemetery to the north and west of the church.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

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11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Rodney S. Collins, Architectural Historian

organization: Department of Culture & History

date: December 10, 1980

street & number: The Cultural Center, Capitol Comp

telephone: 304/348-0240

city or town: Charleston

state: West Virginia

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

- [ ] national
- [X] state
- [ ] local

As the designated State Historic Preservation 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.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

December 7, 1981

For NCRS use only

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

Keeper of the National Register

Chief of Registration
Ruble Church, Wirt County, West Virginia
