

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

For HCRS use only

received

date entered

1. Name

historic West Liberty Presbyterian Church; West Liberty Federated Church

and/or common West Liberty Federated Church

2. Location

street & number Main (Liberty) Street (Route 88) _____ not for publication

city, town West Liberty _____ vicinity of _____ congressional district First

state West Virginia code 54 county Ohio code 069

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
____ district	____ public	☒ occupied	____ agriculture
☒ building(s)	☒ private	____ unoccupied	____ commercial
____ structure	____ both	____ work in progress	____ educational
____ site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	____ entertainment
____ object	____ in process	☒ yes: restricted	____ government
	____ being considered	____ yes: unrestricted	____ industrial
		____ no	____ military
			____ museum
			____ park
			____ private residence
			☒ religious
			____ scientific
			____ transportation
			____ other:

4. Owner of Property

name Presbytery of the Upper Ohio Valley

street & number 907 National Road

city, town Wheeling _____ vicinity of _____ state West Virginia 26003

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Ohio County Courthouse

street & number 12th and Chapline Streets

city, town Wheeling _____ state West Virginia

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title _____ has this property been determined eligible? ____ yes ____ no

date _____ federal ____ state ____ county ____ local

depository for survey records

city, town _____ state

7. Description

Condition

☐ excellent
☒ good
☐ fair

☐ deteriorated
☐ ruins
☐ unexposed

Check one

☐ unaltered
☒ altered

Check one

☒ original site
☐ moved date _____

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The West Liberty Federated Church is a simple rectangle in form with projecting entrance vestibule. Both front and sides are articulately divided by architectural elements, a central projection defines three bays across the west (front) elevation while indented panels distinguish five bays on each side. Following typical practices of High Victorian Gothic style, builders incorporated brick and stone into a bichrome exterior, using both common (on rear and sides) and stretcher bonding atop the dressed sandstone foundation (a beveled water table carries the slightly protruding basement walls into line with main walls above). Finally, steeply pitched roofs of vestibule (with original slate shingles) and main unit are behind parapet gables.

Church entrances are through a double-door vestibule (doors here have a simple, almost primitive, vertical board arrangement) and a rear opening at basement level (with paneled surrounds). Fenestration is regular and symmetrical featuring pointed-arch windows, five to each side and two at the front (stained-glass panes formerly in these double-hung sash were replaced after a hurricane did considerable damage in the 1950s). Other openings include a design of three circles on the front wall above the vestibule and a closed-in, lancet-type window between the former and gable peak.

Projections above roof level are numerous. These include four low brick chimneys, two on each side, minaret-like elements atop pillars at each corner, and the high steeple with open belfry. This latter feature emphasizes overall verticality with a high, pointed roof above the belfry and a base that incorporates alternating indentations and projections at corners.

Exterior decoration is subtle in variation of brick and stone, but it defines the structure's character. Typical of Gothic design, it uses pointed and steep-pitched elements while delightfully blending red brick and buff sandstone in a bichrome presentation offset by white-painted wooden trim. On the front, decorative sandstone caps buttresses, forms coping at the vestibule, is used in sills and hoodmolds of windows, and is implanted as shield-like designs beside and below the stone-surrounded three-circle window. Brick corbeling creates a pointed-arch cornice on the west and is used to bring side bay recesses in line with a flat cornice on north and south elevations.

The interior mimics the evident height of exterior roof, although inside ceiling is about fifteen feet below outside roof. Above double doors leading into the sanctuary is the only remaining stained-glass window. While general features are rather plain (darkly stained woodwork, including chairrail, and painted plaster walls), a striking pressed-tin ceiling (inset into sections outlined by wooden beams that spring from wall supports) is impressive. Richly decorative in its patterns, this feature (painted white, but peeling) dominates interior architecture.

Beneath the sanctuary there is a partial basement (enlarged around

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West Liberty Federated Church, West Liberty, Ohio County, West Virginia

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the 1930s), approached from an enclosed stair at the northeast corner and formed into several rooms. Walls here are about twenty-four inches thick. Other than changes in this basement and replacement of stained-glass windows, alterations have been few. Most recent have been installation of a new roof (except on the vestibule) and low-pressure sandblasting and silicone coating of exterior walls (brick surfaces appear lightly pitted in some sections).

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below	landscape architecture	religion
— prehistoric	— archeology-prehistoric	— community planning	— science
— 1400-1499	— archeology-historic	— conservation	— sculpture
— 1500-1599	— agriculture	— economics	— social/
— 1600-1699	☒ architecture	— education	— humanitarian
— 1700-1799	— art	— engineering	— theater
☒ 1800-1899	— commerce	— exploration/settlement	— transportation
— 1900-	— communications	— industry	☒ other (specify)
		— invention	Local history

Specific dates 1873

Builder/Architect

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

West Liberty's Federated Church today stands as what might be the premier architectural expression within this old community. Its setting on a knoll in a town surrounded by rolling hills adds to its general verticality, thus providing a prominent reference point in a panoramic view from any direction. Its use of characteristic High Victorian Gothic design is unique in this village, and the bichrome exterior with dominating tower and corner "minarets" is attractive. Not all significant architectural elements are on the exterior, however, as is attested by an equally pleasing pressed-tin ceiling recessed between wooden beams.

Explanation of Significance Statement

Presbyterianism at West Liberty extends back to 1782; a formal congregation was organized at then Ohio Court House in 1788. The present building was constructed in 1873 as their third church edifice, and since 1922 it has been a federated institution, serving both Presbyterians and Methodists. Community involvement by clergy and congregation led to the founding of West Liberty Academy in 1838, a school to which present West Liberty State College traces its roots.

At a cost of approximately \$10,000, this church was completed and dedicated in 1873. Its High Victorian Gothic style combined with the congregation's established position to provide immediate recognition of its architectural prominence. Although relatively small in dimensions and subtle in features, this edifice strongly reveals important detail and sophistication. From characteristic use of more than one exterior facing material to a general steepness and pointed nature of gables, windows and doors, it displays attachment to its period and style.

Among outstanding features are its blending of buff sandstone with red brick to form a bichrome appearance highlighted in hoodmolds, shield-like decorations and buttress caps at the vestibule. Corner pillars culminating in octagonal capped "minarets" combine with a rather intricate steeple and belfry to emphasize height and complement pointed arches of windows below. Even an almost primitive roughness of vertical-board double entrance doors is important here, providing a note of provinciality and local "flavor."

The interior, too, is generally subtle in its features, and the high pressed-tin ceiling (believed to have been made in nearby Wheeling), although becoming a fairly common element at the time of church construction, is well matched to outside lines. Offset by exposed wooden beams, this recessed ceiling is composed of a series of square blocks, embossed with curvilinear or floral designs, surrounded by a border of undulating

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patterns formed into several rows. It presents a subtle decoration where plainness often is a rule.

Within its village setting and viewed from hillsides that encompass West Liberty, the Federated Church stands out as a special component of the townscape. It is an uncomplicated but well designed building that combines certain characteristic elements of High Victorian Gothic style with vernacular interpretations to produce a significant landmark in this small West Virginia town.

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Reiger, Cornelius C., ed. West Liberty Yesterday and Today. Wheeling, W.Va.: Wheeling News and Lithograph Co., 1939.

West Virginia Historical Records Survey, Work Projects Administration. Inventory of the Church Archives of West Virginia: The Presbyterian Churches. Charleston, W.Va.: The West Virginia Historical Records Survey, 1941.

Wilson, Gill I. The Story of Presbyterianism in West Virginia. N.p., n.d.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Earl, J.A. "Pioneer Church of the Panhandle," West Virginia Review, XVII, No. 4 (Jan. 1940), 112-13.
Earl, Jesse A. A Sketch of the Early History of West Liberty and Short Creek. N.p., n.d. (West Liberty, 1936?).

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property 1/3 acre (approximately)

Quadrangle name Bethany, W.Va.-Pa.

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UMT References

A

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Zone Easting Northing

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Zone Easting Northing

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Verbal boundary description and justification

The church is located on town lots 34, 35 and 36 in West Liberty, fronted by W.Va. Route 88 (Main or Liberty Street).

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

state	code	county	code
state	code	county	code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title	James E. Harding, Historian		
	Historic Preservation Unit		
organization	Dert. of Culture and History	date	March 13, 1980
	The Cultural Center		
street & number	Capitol Complex	telephone	(304) 348-0240
city or town	Charleston	state	West Virginia

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

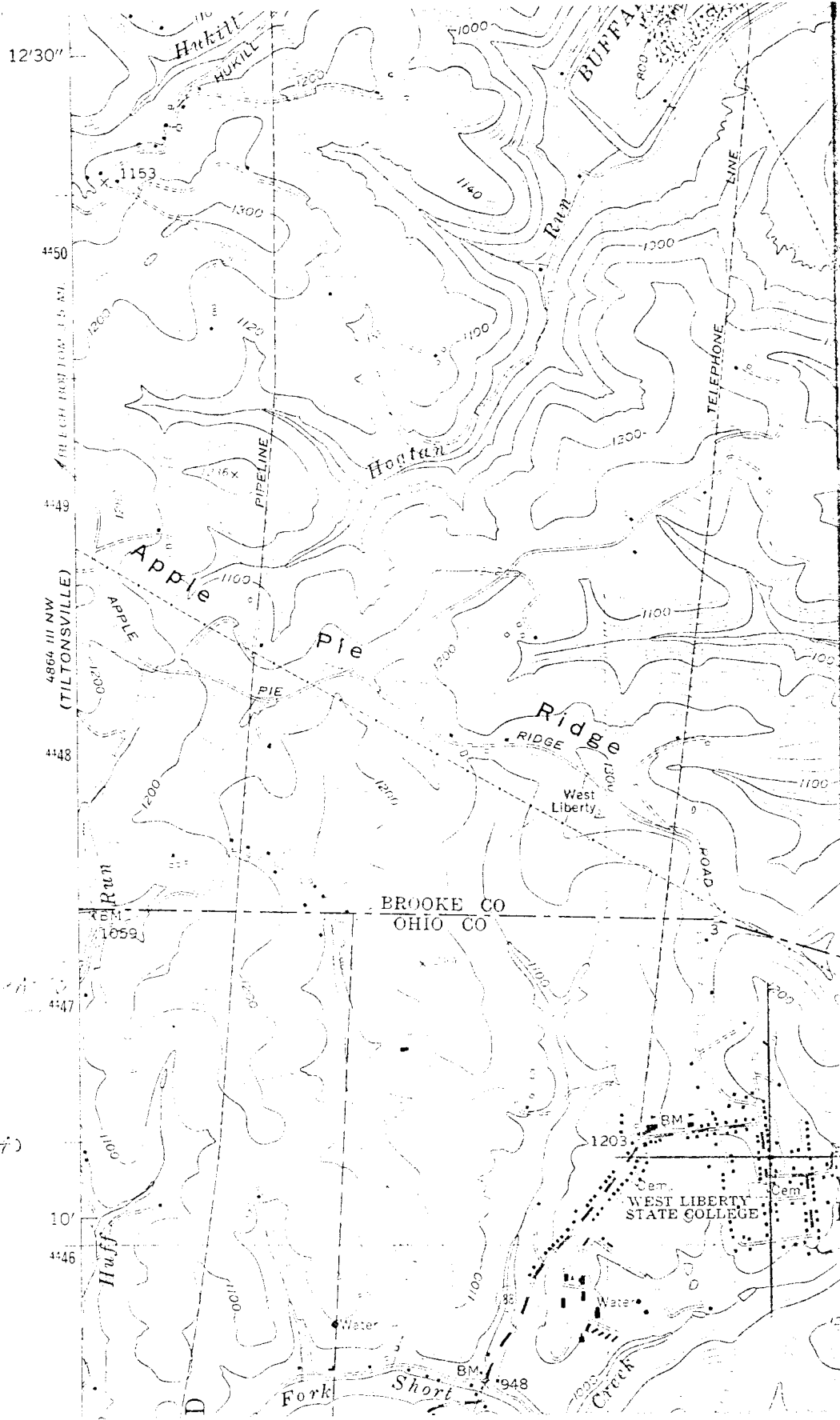
The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

___ national ___ 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 Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

title	date
For HCRS use only	
I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register	
	date
Keeper of the National Register	
Attest:	date
Chief of Registration	



WEST LIBERTY, OHIO
 17/534630/4446340

