

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

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

1. Name of PropertyHistoric name: Mt. Zion Lutheran Church and Propst School

Other names/site number: _____

Name of related multiple property listing:

n/a**2. Location**Street & number: Route 23/1City or town: Franklin State: WV County: PendletonNot For Publication: ☐ Vicinity: ☒**3. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this X 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 X meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

___ national ___ statewide X local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

X A ___ B X C ___ D_____
Signature of certifying official/Title:**Date**_____
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official:**Date**_____
Title :**State or Federal agency/bureau
or Tribal Government**

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4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- ☐ entered in the National Register
☐ determined eligible for the National Register
☐ determined not eligible for the National Register
☐ removed from the National Register
☐ other (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

- Private: ☒
- Public – Local ☐
- Public – State ☐
- Public – Federal ☐

Category of Property

- Building(s) ☒
- District ☐
- Site ☐
- Structure ☐
- Object ☐

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Number of Resources within Property

Contributing

3

Noncontributing

buildings

sites

structures

objects

3

0

Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

RELIGION / religious facility

EDUCATION / school

Current Functions

RELIGION / religious facility

RECREATION AND CULTURE / museum

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7. Description

Architectural Classification

LATE 19TH AND EARLY 20TH CENTURY REVIVALS/Gothic Revival
Other: Front Gable

Materials:

Principal exterior materials of the property: FOUNDATION / stone, WALLS / wood,
ROOF / metal

Narrative Description

Summary Paragraph

The Mt. Zion Lutheran Church and Propst School are located in a clearing on a sloping site on a mountainside, each built in 1913. Access is by Capito Hill Road, now a country lane, but once a main thoroughfare between the Thorn Creek, Mitchell and Dahmer communities in rural Pendleton County. The buildings replaced a previous log school/church on this site and were central to community life. An early reverend oversaw the construction of the church, and personally handcrafted the ornamental altar, lecterns and pews. The one-story rectangular frame church has a high-pitched standing seam metal roof with steeple above the door and rests on a stone foundation. The northwest and southeast sides have gable ends. It is a simplified execution of the Gothic Revival style, with some ornamental details such as triangular peaked windows and carved or embellished applied woodwork details, especially on the altar and appointments inside. The school is a rectangular, gable front, wood frame building on a stone foundation with a low-pitched roof, simple single-hung six-over-six wood windows, and unpainted wood board interior. The modest architecture is typical of one-room schools of the period, functional rather than grand. The community came together to build both the church and the school. A one-hole wooden outhouse is located close to both buildings and still serves each. There is no plumbing in the buildings. All three buildings have historic integrity and look largely as they did when built.

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Narrative Description

The church, school, and outhouse are located together on a sloping mountainside plot between the unincorporated communities of Dahmer and Mitchell. It is a rural, sparsely populated area, dominated by forested mountains and large tracts of farmland. Hardwood, pine and cedar trees surround the site, along with cow pastures just off the lot boundaries. Capito Hill Road runs in front of the site to the northwest.

Mt. Zion Lutheran Church – 1913 – Contributing

The church is designed in a simplified Gothic Revival style. It is 38' 6" long (not including the 2' deep altar bump out on the east side) and 26' 3" wide. It is rectangular shaped with a front gable standing seam metal roof topped by a steeple above the door. The steeple has pointed arched louvred vents on all four sides. The building is made of wood framing with horizontal clapboard siding on a stone foundation. Square beams span the foundation. There are six two-over-two single-hung 102" H x 43" W windows with pointed tops, three windows each on the northeast and southwest sides. The windows are original and the frames, muntins and sashes are wood. A few of the rectangular glass panes on the southwest side were replaced due to storm damage sometime in recent decades. The general shape and style of the church is similar to many other churches in the area, though Mt. Zion has some extra details like simple corbels at the steeple eaves, tri-part triangular window top detail, and the same tri-part window above the door. Wooden steps lead to double doors, which enter directly into the worship space. The interior walls, ceiling and floor are painted wood boards. A brick chimney was added in the 1940s to vent a Ward's Deluxe furnace (still in the basement, but no longer in use). A partial basement was dug at that time to fit the furnace below the church floor. The church was electrified in 1949. It looks mostly as it did when built, with the chimney the only alteration to the exterior. Other similar churches in the area have had porticos, and/or annexes added through the years.

The inside of the church contains a recessed niche with raised platform for the altar, and moveable lectern and stands. The interior walls, floor, and ceiling are painted, narrow tongue and groove boards. The ceiling is flat and painted white. Rev. A. E. Kraus oversaw construction of the church and handcrafted the altar, furniture and pews. The raised altar platform is reached by two steps on three sides. There is a small choir area with short pews beside the altar area at the east corner, at base floor level. The pews for the congregation are 10' long, on either side of a 64" W center aisle. There is an antique Beckwith pump organ on the northeast side of the Church, separating the congregation's pews and the choir pews.

Propst School – 1913 – Contributing

The school is a one-story, rectangular, wood framed, front gable, clapboard sided building on a stone foundation with a standing-seam metal roof with gable ends. It is 32' 2" x 20' 4". It is a simple design, built for functionality. The six 42" W x 64" H windows are 6 x 6 single hung style wooden sash windows. The windows and all panes appear to be original. There are no windows on the south side. The central door is 31" W and accessed by wooden steps with a small landing. Inside there is a small anteroom on the left side of the entry and a wood burning

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stove in the center of the classroom, with a stone chimney on the roof. The interior walls, ceiling and floor are wood boards. The school was electrified in 1949. The school looks as it did when built with no alterations. There are many other schools in the area built in a similar style.

The school is now a private museum, open only when a reunion is held in August at the church. It looks as though students just went outside for recess with desks, a long blackboard spanning the entire front (south) wall with the recitation bench below it, water pail, coat pegs and some schoolbooks. The anteroom inside (north side) was used to store children's coats and lunch pails.

Outhouse – ca. 1930s – Contributing

There is a one-hole wooden outhouse to the east of the school that served the church also. It is 4 feet x 4 feet with the door on the north side. This was likely built in the late 1930s/early 1940s when Works Progress Administration (WPA) crews were building other "fly proof" outhouses in the area. It has a metal roof, a concrete floor, and toilet base, with a wooden seat.

Integrity

Each building is watertight and in good repair. They retain their historic integrity and look as they did when built. Of note, a forest fire burned in the immediate vicinity of the church and school in 2024. Neighbors and firefighters saved both. The church sustained fire and smoke damage which was repaired in 2024. The fire damaged some siding, mostly on the northeast corner and the flames got inside the walls in a few places. Siding was replaced, using specially milled pine that matched the width and style of the original. The old knob and tube fuses were removed and a modern fuse box installed. Any damaged wiring was replaced. The outside of the church was repainted. The inside of the church was not seriously damaged but was repainted due to smoke discoloration. All the interior furniture and pews were undamaged. The site was originally bounded by large cedar and pine trees around the buildings. Most of these trees to the immediate northeast of the church and the east property boundary lines were cut down in 2025 due to fire damage, or to remove fire risk in the future.

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

- ☒ A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- ☐ B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☒ C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☐ D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

- ☒ A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- ☐ B. Removed from its original location
- ☐ C. A birthplace or grave
- ☐ D. A cemetery
- ☐ E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- ☐ F. A commemorative property
- ☐ G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

Areas of Significance

Architecture
Education
Social History
Ethnic Heritage: German

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Period of Significance

1913-1976

Significant Dates

1944

Significant Person

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

N/A

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph

The Mt. Zion Lutheran Church and the Propst School are locally significant and eligible for listing in the National Register under *Criterion A: Social History and Education*, *Criterion C: Architecture*, and *Ethnic Heritage: German*. The church also meets *Criteria Consideration A: Religious Properties* as it derives its primary significance from both architectural and historic grounds. The church served as an important social and spiritual center for the region's German American community, while the school was part of a network of one-room schoolhouses providing essential public education to rural areas of Pendleton County in the early twentieth century. The church and school offer a snapshot of the architecture, social life, and heritage of German immigrants who moved from Pennsylvania to Virginia (now West Virginia) in search of cheaper land and a better life in the 1750s. They settled near present day Brandywine in a Lutheran community they called Propstburg.¹ Isolated in the mountains, they formed tightly knit, independent farming communities. Their children moved south from the Propstburg area, down the Potomac Valley, and west over the mountain to settle on their own homesteads and farms.² Most of them moved within an approximately six square mile area. They needed their own church and school. The Mt. Zion Church and Propst School together comprised an essential religious, educational, and social hub for this small German American community. Architecturally, Mt. Zion and Propst are important examples of church and school building designs in rural Pendleton County during the early twentieth century. Their construction is typical of rural communities, functional rather than fancy, made of local materials, built by locals. Mt. Zion Lutheran has more elaborate styling than the school, with some Gothic Revival features, particularly on the appointments inside. The existing Mt. Zion Lutheran Church and Propst School were built in 1913, the start date of the Period of Significance in this application. The end date is 1976, the National Register's 50-year cut-off date. One significant date is 1944, the year the Propst School closed and was acquired by the Mt. Zion Church for Sunday School classes.

¹ Oren F. Morton, *A History of Pendleton County West Virginia* (self-published, Franklin, WV, 1910), pg 36.

² Ibid. pg 148.

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Narrative Statement of Significance

Background: German American Settlement in Pendleton County

It is important to note the role geography played in immigrant settlement patterns here, and its importance in allowing retention of their German culture, heritage and religious beliefs. The first immigrants in this part of Pendleton County (what was then Augusta/Rockingham, Virginia) were Germans who left Pennsylvania and followed the Potomac River up into these fertile mountain valleys seeking cheaper land and a better life. The first pioneers arrived in the 1750s and settled at a bend in the Potomac River three miles south of what is now Brandywine, West Virginia (the river is named on current maps as the South Fork of the South Branch of the Potomac). The settlement was called Propstburg after Johann (John) Michael Propst, who arrived in 1753.

Isolated in the mountains, families could maintain their language, customs, and agricultural practices. German was the primary language of Lutheran church services until the 1830s, and some German “Old Dutch” local dialects were still widely spoken up until the 1910s.³ Use of these local dialects was perceived as a negative trait as successive generations were more assimilated into English schools, books, and movies, and it became less spoken outside the home. Communities such as those near Mt. Zion and Propst School do still speak some words and phrases passed down through their grandparents, such as “schnitz” (dried apples), “strubly” (messy), “snickerdoodle” (cookie), and “haint” (ghost).⁴ The settlers brought traditions like barn hex signs and other occult beliefs, along with herbal healing and “witch doctoring” practices, paired with their Lutheran religious doctrine.⁵

On John Propst’s land, the Old Propst Church congregation was organized in 1760. This was the first known Lutheran Church community in Pendleton County. Later, in 1769, Propst and his wife Catherine sold 3 ½ acres to the Old Propst Church congregation for a church building.⁶ In addition to the Propsts, other pioneer family names at that time included Mitchell, Evick, Hoover, Simmons, and Pitsenbarger. Their descendants moved south from the Propstburg area, down the Potomac Valley, and west over the mountain to settle on their own homesteads and farms. They moved through Propst Gap to Propst Corner (at the intersection of Capito Hill Road and Dry Run Road, about seventeen miles travel distance), or farther up the Potomac Valley (South) to form Sugar Grove, and on a few miles westward to form Moyers, Sinnetts Lane, Lower Thorn, Mitchell and Dahmer. At some point, a log schoolhouse was constructed on the site of the existing Mt. Zion Lutheran and the Propst School to serve these communities. The site

³ Oren F. Morton, *A History of Pendleton County West Virginia* (self-published, Franklin, WV, 1910), pg 137.

⁴ Paula Mitchell, “German Dialects Influence English Language,” *The Pendleton Times*, Oct. 4, 2022, Editorial Section – Sugar Grove / Times Past.

⁵ Gerald C. Milnes, *Signs Cures and Witchery – German Appalachian Folklore* (The University of Tennessee Press, Knoxville, 2007), pages 62, 63, 65-72, 86, 100, 116, 121, 122, 169, 176, 178.

⁶ Don Mills, Inc., *Pendleton Co. West Virginia – Past and Present* (Walsworth Publishing Co., Third Printing, 2007), 23; NRHP #86000779, Old Propst Church.

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(then known as the "Schoolhouse Meadow") was believed to have served as a muster ground to train local men for military duty, likely prior to the Civil War.⁷

It was from this log building that Rev. J. F. A. Lautenschlager organized the Mt. Zion Lutheran Church in 1885. The earliest entry in the Church's record book was dated Oct 25, 1885, and contained a list of the communicants of the first Communion Service. Church records note that seventy-five people took Communion at the Church in 1889.⁸ Church services were conducted in the old log Propst School until 1913, when the existing Mt. Zion Church was built. The log building was torn down sometime afterwards.

John Albert Pitsenbarger, and Mary Ann (Polly) Propst Pitsenbarger deeded the site for the existing Church and School in two small adjoining parcels to the Board of Education (3/4 acre), and Mt. Zion Lutheran Church (73 square poles, about 1/2 acre) in 1912. It is interesting to note that Mary Ann (Polly) Propst Pitsenbarger is a descendant of John Michael Propst, and John Albert Pitsenbarger is the brother of Ananias Pitsenbarger. The Ananias Pitsenbarger Farm is only a few miles away, and is on the National Register, #11000557 (See Map 3 for these geographical relationships). Rev. A. E. Krause supervised construction of the church, which was built by community members, in 1913. The Propst one-room schoolhouse was constructed around the same time as well.

Education

Historically, certainly prior to and during most of the period of the Civil War, there was little regulation and oversight of education. Up to then education was still a private matter and illiteracy was high. Classes would have been taught by competent parents or people hired as teachers, but who often had no or little formal education as such. The Lutheran church leaders would often teach the children the three Rs (readin', writin', and 'rithmetic), which was considered all that was necessary. There were very few books other than the Bible. German language was prevalent and the classes were likely taught in the Old German dialect. An alternative for those with means would have been for-pay services and students from outside the area would board with "good families" while being taught. Education became more of a priority after the Civil War. Legislatively, in 1872 the West Virginia constitution established a free public school system. Communities in Pendleton County stepped up and the heyday of the one-room rural schoolhouse followed. At first many were log, like the original one on the Propst School site. Later, frame buildings were constructed around the turn of the century.⁹

As the number of children grew, each little pocket of homes in a community would build a school for them. Because these schools needed to be within walking distance, their numbers were high even in rural places such as Pendleton County. The Dahmer School, for example, is located

⁷ Don Mills, Inc., *Pendleton Co West Virginia – Past and Present* (Wadsworth Publishing Co., Third Printing, 2007), 43.

⁸ Mt. Zion Lutheran Church, back page of almost all Homecoming Reunions, held annually since 1980, in August, written by Alda Simmons Berlin.

⁹ Oren F. Morton, *A History of Pendleton County West Virginia* (self-published, Franklin, WV, 1910), pg 125-127.

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only a couple of miles away from the Propst School. It was named in honor of its first teacher, John George Dahmer, who also taught at the Propst School and others in the area. John George lived with his parents at Dahmer Gap (a mountain pass from Propstburg to Propst Corner) and owned no land. He loved books and regarded Math as his hobby. Probably to find a vocation, he attended a school 30 miles away in what is now Highland County, Virginia and boarded with a family there. The teacher was Patrick Maloy, who had graduated with honors from Washington College in 1849. The exact dates of John George's instruction are unknown, but he probably attended either just before or just after his enlistment for the Civil War.¹⁰ John George went on to become Postmaster and Justice of the Peace. His Dahmer homestead, near Dahmer Gap, has a large collection of books, many of which were loaned out to Propst School students who signed their names in them.¹¹

Though the students John George taught at the Propst School had the benefit of more and better books than were typical of rural schools, the curriculum would have been standard for community-centered one room schools. Books used were the *McGuffey Reader*, geography, and arithmetic. If books were available, other subjects such as history, grammar, poetry, etc. were taught. Some of these books from various time periods remain in the Propst School. Local resident, Gernon Hoover, recalls that a school day in the late 1930s was Monday-Friday from about 9:00 to 4:00 with one or two short (15 min) recess periods, and a lunch break. He remembers that English was first, followed by another class, then there was a short recess. Afterwards would be Math, Geography, Spelling, then other classes throughout the day. Up until about 1930 the school term was about five months a year. The morning usually began with a devotional – songs or prayers or Bible reading. A small amount of homework might be required. Eight grades studied at the same time, some at teacher's knee, some at the recitation bench below the blackboard, some studying at their desks. Teachers boarded near the school with neighbors.

Attendance dwindled as children grew up and families moved away to find jobs. Additionally, as transportation improved in the 1930s and West Virginia adopted a county unit school system, boards of education began consolidating one-room schoolhouses into larger facilities. In Pendleton County, schools at that time were required to have an average of ten pupils to remain open. Gernon Hoover remembers that he attended the Mitchell School and the Propst School, depending on which one needed to reach an average count of ten pupils. In 1944, the Propst School had only seven students, and so was closed in February. The students finished the rest of the year at public schools in Franklin. One of the last attendees was Arvella Pitsenbarger Blair, a granddaughter of the original owners of the land. After its closure, the Pendleton County Board of Education sold the school to Mt. Zion Lutheran Church for Sunday School services. Later Mt. Zion sold the School to Arvella Blair, and she is the current owner.

Social History

The church and school throughout their histories were intertwined in the social fabric of the rural community which included primarily German American people in the areas of Dahmer, Mitchell,

¹⁰ Tom Blair, compiler, John George Dahmer – *Biographical Notes* (self-published pamphlet), pg 5-6.

¹¹ Teresa and Jeffrey Munn, personal collection of area books (from the Johnny Arvin Dahmer estate).

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Moyers, Sinnetts Lane, Lower Thorn, and Propst Corner. Many of these neighborhoods fell within the Lutherans' South Branch Parish and had their own churches and one-room schools. It is important to remember that up until the late 1930s most children walked to school, and folks also primarily walked to church. Therefore, all these small churches and school buildings were needed to provide essential social, spiritual, and educational services. Their proximity meant that folks might attend any of them for a social gathering, funeral, wedding, etc. Early circuit preachers served the Mt. Zion Church and others in the South Branch Parish, some as far as twenty miles away (in then Crabbottom, Virginia, now Blue Grass, Virginia). In addition to Mt. Zion, the Lutheran South Branch Parish also included the St. Luke, St. Paul, Mt. Olive and New Hope churches. At one time, Mt. Zion's membership was the largest in the Parish. Church services were held every three weeks at Mt. Zion up until 1937. Thereafter they were held every two weeks. The congregation sometimes conducted their own Sunday School services if no preacher was in attendance. After Faith Lutheran Church was built in Franklin in 1948, the Parish became Thorn Creek Parish and consisted of Mt. Zion, St. Luke, St. John and St. Paul. In 1978, the Mt. Zion and St. Luke congregations merged with services then held at St. Luke (now closed). Mt. Zion was officially closed in 1980. Later that year, the Mt. Zion Lutheran Church Preservation Association of Dahmer was formed to maintain the building. St. John Lutheran Church is still active in nearby Sinnett's Lane. St. Paul Lutheran Church is further out of the area and was moved into another Parish.

For many years the Propst School served as a voting precinct for Franklin District, and it offered a place for Christmas and last day of term programs, lawn parties, spelling bees, box suppers, cake auctions, peanut socials, and etc. which were widely enjoyed by the community.¹² The School and the Church were important meeting places for young people of neighboring families and there was much intermarrying between the original pioneer families' descendants. When used by the Mt. Zion Church, the Propst School was the base for the first Luther League in the South Branch Parish in the 1940s-60s. The Luther League was the official youth organization of various American Lutheran church bodies, founded in 1895 in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, to foster Christian education, fellowship, and service. The League was very active in community service projects. For example, there were 29 members in 1951, and 100% participated in service projects. Sunset services were held, with one in August 1950 on nearby "Sam's Mountain" mentioned in the Dahmer section of the local *Pendleton Times* newspaper. The Leaguers also went caroling into the homes of the aged and sick.¹³

The church held Communion twice a year. It hosted weddings, funerals, baptisms and other important rituals. No church cemetery was ever established, though many family plots are nearby. A World War II service flag hangs in the church with eleven blue stars and one gold. The roster is a record of church members who served overseas in defense of our country.

¹² Johnny Arvin Dahmer, compiled and edited by David S. Kuykendall, *The Dahmer Letter 1968-1982* (Gateway Press, Inc., 2002), many references, and Elvira Crummett's diaries from 1935-38, transcribed by David Kuykendall; Don Mills, Inc., *Pendleton Co West Virginia – Past and Present* (Wadsworth Publishing Co., Third Printing, 2007), 34; Interviews with Arvella Pitsenbarger Blair, Gernon Hoover, and Rev. Sherri Schafer.

¹³ Johnny Arvin Dahmer, personal notes, and various Luther League letters, handbooks, study books, reading lists and etc. in the personal collection of Teresa and Jeff Munn (from Johnny Arvin Dahmer's estate).

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The church also had Christmas programs, performed by the Sunday School classes. Local historian Johnny Arvin Dahmer (son of teacher John Dahmer) wrote that Rev. Paul E. Lautenschlager was the pastor when Mt. Zion Lutheran Church presented their first Christmas program in 1928. He recalls that a spruce tree reached the ceiling, decorated with store bought ornaments and different colored candles. There were wrapped presents under the tree to be handed out at the end of the program. Rev. S. Kullman (1937-1976) particularly liked the tradition of Belsnickel and encouraged students, Luther Leaguers, and parishioners to enjoy those wintertime revels. Belsnickelers were welcome in his home and often started their masquerading visitations to the neighbors from there.¹⁴

Mt. Zion homecoming reunions are held each year in August and consist of a service, potluck meal, and visits inside the Propst School. Written programs always include the history of the Church on the back page, and sometimes there is a special presentation, such as the history talk given by Arvella Pitsenbarger Blair in August 2025. Neighbors organized a Christmas sing and short service in December 2025. Other neighbors were married there in May 2026. The church and school are still community touchstones. The officers of the Preservation Association and other volunteers keep the church and school neat and tidy and in good repair.

Architecture

Mt. Zion Lutheran Church is a modest but excellent example of Gothic Revival, an extremely popular architectural style for churches around the turn of the twentieth century. Mt. Zion specifically seems to be a simplified interpretation known as Carpenter Gothic. Carpenter Gothic took some of the hallmark features of Gothic Revival and adapted them for smaller, wood frame buildings. Carpenter Gothic was often employed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries by smaller congregations who lacked the funding and membership necessary to build grand, ostentatious brick and stone sanctuaries more common in urban areas. The abundant supply of lumber in the West Virginia forests made it an inexpensive and convenient building material. Mt. Zion and other small rural churches like it were constructed with local materials and local labor. Key features of Gothic Revival and/or Carpenter Gothic architecture present in the Mt. Zion Church include a steeply pitched roof, a prominent belltower, a front gable, and pointed arch windows.

Mt. Zion was among several churches in the region that were built in this general, modified Gothic Revival style – a frame rectangular structure with bell tower, high pitched roof with gable ends, some with pointed arch windows. These include Martin Luther Lutheran Church in Brandywine, Wilson Chapel in Upper Tract, St. Luke's in Mitchell, Mt. Olive Evangelical Lutheran Church in Peru, and St. Matthew in Dorcas. Some of these churches have had alterations or additions that detrimentally impact their architectural character. The Wilson Chapel has asbestos siding, partially infilled replacement windows, and a small non-historic portico, for

¹⁴ Johnny Arvin Dahmer, compiled and edited by David S. Kuykendall, *The Dahmer Letter 1968-1982* (Gateway Press, Inc., 2002), pg 346-7; other unpublished notes by Johnny Arvin Dahmer, in the collection of Jeff and Teresa Munn (estate of Johnny Arvin Dahmer); and references in Elvira Dahmer Crummett's diaries from 1935-38.

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example, while the Mt. Olive church has a non-historic front porch. Others, such as St. Luke's and Martin Luther, are virtually unchanged from their original construction. Mt. Zion falls within this latter category.

Mt. Zion Church is a little more elaborately styled than its local counterparts, with some additional architectural features such as corbels at the roof of the bell steeple, tri-part triangular window tops, and the same tri-part pointed window above the door. The Rev. Krause crafted all the furniture for this church, which also reflects a Gothic Revival influence. There are applied wood trim pieces, some with decorative cutouts on the white altar and furniture, and on door and window trim. The trim is painted or stained in a multi-color motif. Wood crosses adorn many pieces, and Alpha and Omega iconography is painted on the altar. The pews have pointed arch sides.

The Propst School is also significant as an excellent, well-preserved example of late nineteenth/early twentieth century one-room schoolhouse design in West Virginia. Historian Paul Lutz wrote that these school buildings "tended to be cheaply constructed and featured rough-cut frames, lap siding, tin roofs, south-facing windows, and a potbelly stove."¹⁵ Limited funds, small student populations, and the demand for large numbers of schools resulted in simple, utilitarian buildings, constructed with local materials and labor. Their modest designs reflect the resources available to rural communities in the early twentieth century.

The Propst School was built with traditional methods in a simple and functional style, of frame construction on a stone foundation, and clapboard outside. The Propst School was similar to many others which stood nearby such as the Dahmer School, Mitchell Mountain, Sandy Ridge, Propst Gap, and Brandywine schools. The inside is typical of one-room schoolhouses of the period. Walls are horizontal unpainted wooden boards, and the floor is tongue and groove wood boards. The ceiling is flat and low, also of unpainted boards. The window and door trim is very simple. Two of the original desks remain and they are rustic in design, simple bench seats with a fixed table or desk attached to the seat in front of each bench. They were affixed to the floor. The central wood stove remains and is typical of one-room schools in rural West Virginia. Many surviving one-room schoolhouse buildings in the state have been converted into barns, sheds, garages, churches, and residences, with typical alterations including replacement siding and windows, the construction of additions, and the division of the interior into multiple rooms. Others have been relocated for public display. The Propst School stands in its original location and retains most of its original materials. Its unaltered design perfectly embodies the construction methods for an early twentieth century, rural one-room schoolhouse.

¹⁵ Paul F. Lutz, "The One-Room School," *e-WV: The West Virginia Encyclopedia*, February 9, 2024, accessed June 30, 2026, <https://www.wvencyclopedia.org/entries/1705>.

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9. Major Bibliographical References

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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 # _____
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- ☒ State Historic Preservation Office
- ☐ Other State agency
- ☐ Federal agency. ☐ Local government ☐ University
- ☐ Other Name of repository: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): WVSHPO - Site PD-0526_Rev01 / PD-0527-Rev01

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10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 1 ¼ acres

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1. Latitude:

Longitude:

Or

UTM References

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

☐ NAD 1927 or ☒ NAD 1983

1. Zone: 17N	Easting: 644505	Northing: 4268852
2. Zone: 17N	Easting: 644552	Northing: 4268830
3. Zone: 17N	Easting: 644541	Northing: 4268802
4. Zone: 17N	Easting: 644532	Northing: 4268806
5. Zone: 17N	Easting: 644517	Northing: 4268746
6. Zone: 17N	Easting: 644459	Northing: 4268776

Verbal Boundary Description

Capito Hill Rd bounds both parcels on the northwest side. A fence line to the immediate northeast of the church is another leg of the plat. The back boundary on the southeast falls roughly at the base of a rocky hill, and the southwest boundary below the school follows an existing line in the original deed and falls below (includes) the historically referenced "Schoolhouse Meadow." The boundaries are also depicted in Map 1.

Boundary Justification

The boundary fully encompasses the church and schoolhouse parcels in their entirety, as first delineated in the 1910s. The original historic parcel boundaries are the same as the current boundaries, shown on the tax records for Pendleton County, West Virginia.

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Map 1 Nomination Boundary outlined in red.

11. Form Prepared By

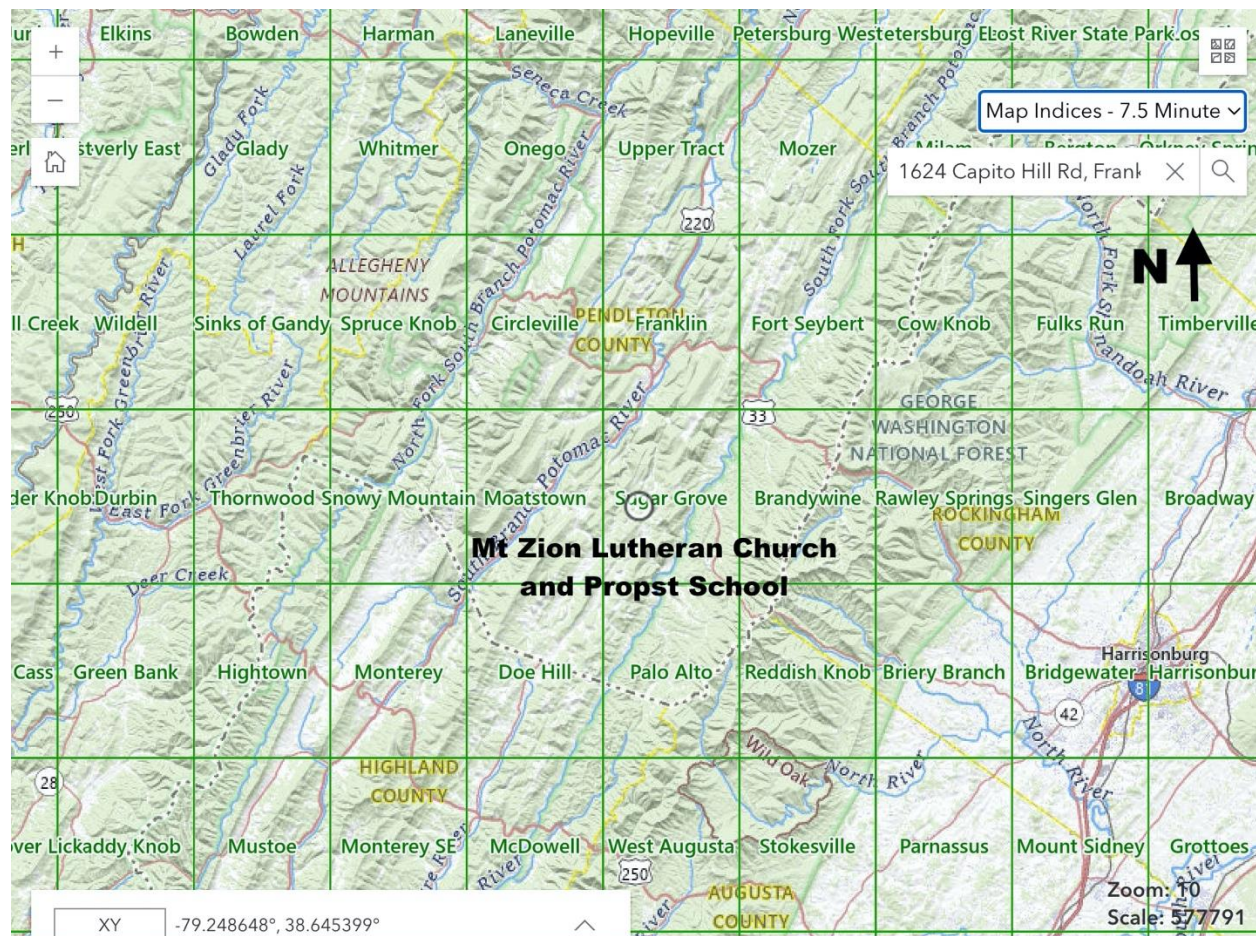
name/title: Teresa Munn; edited by Cody Straley, National Register Coordinator
organization: Secretary, Mt. Zion Lutheran Church Preservation Assoc of Dahmer; West Virginia State Historic Preservation Office
street & number: 3576 Dry Run Road
city or town: Franklin state: WV zip code: 26807
e-mail: teresa@munnerwerks.com
telephone: 757-254-4542
date: 5/12/2026

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Additional Documentation

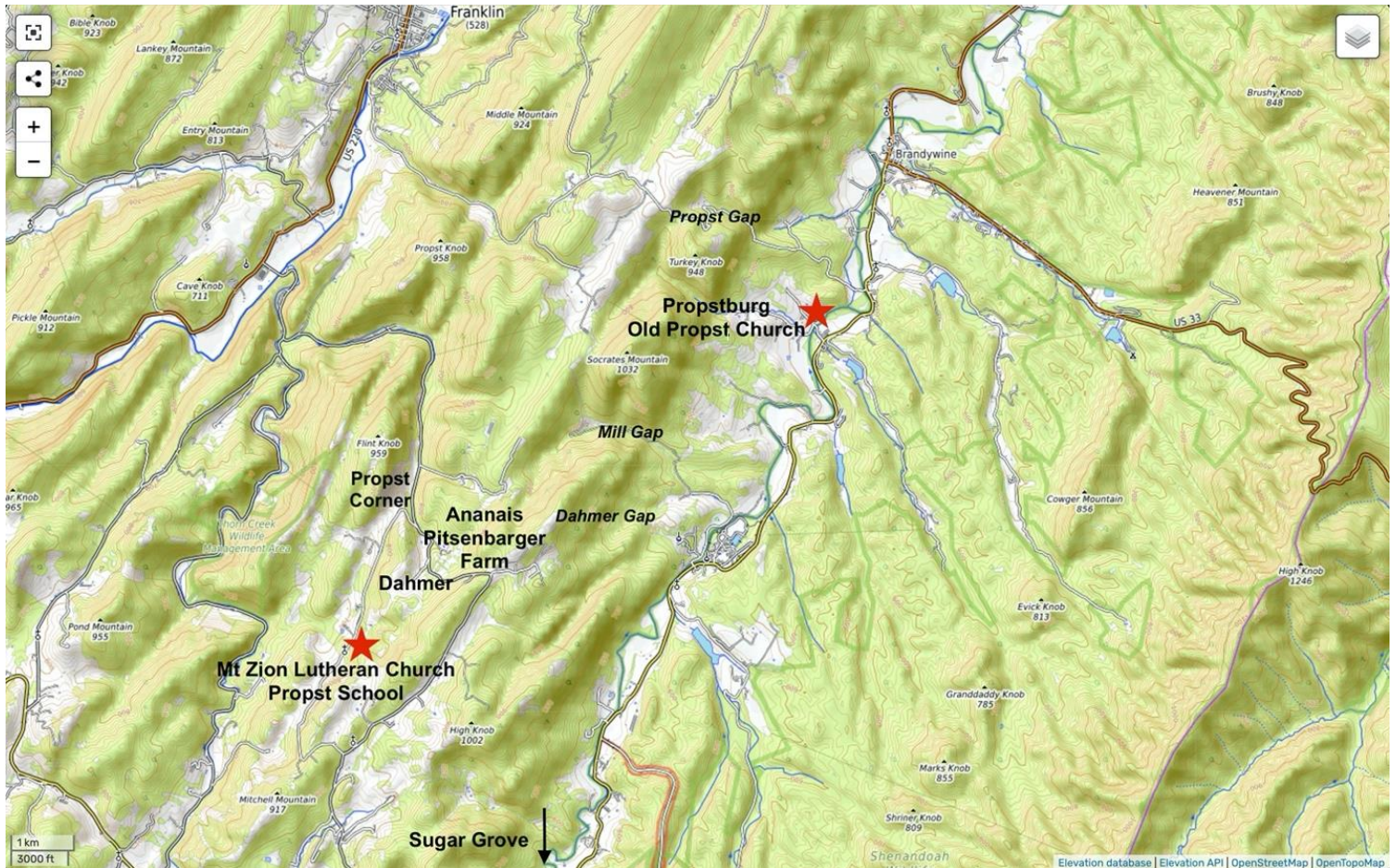
- **Maps:** A USGS map or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.



Map 2 USGS Map

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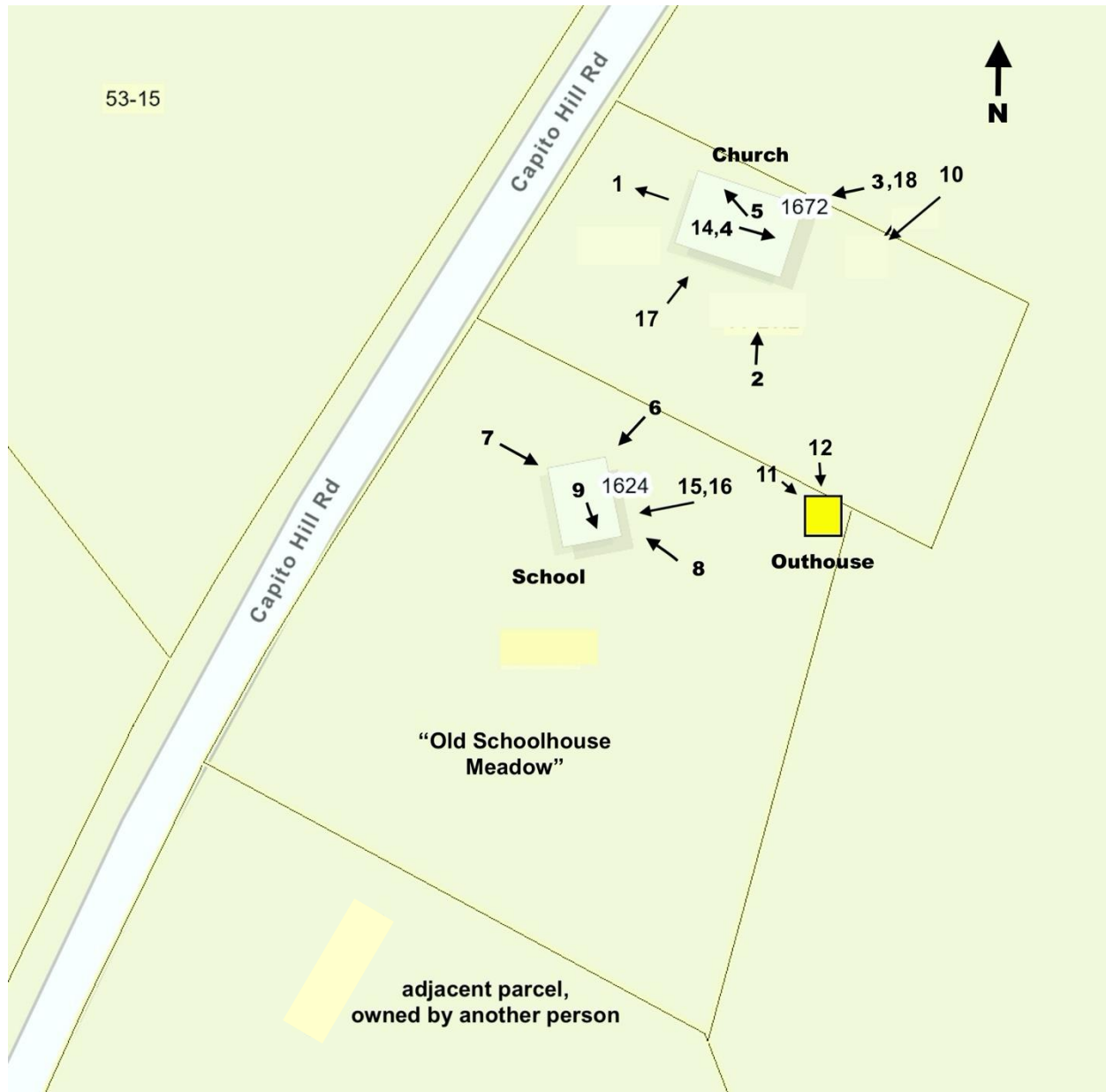


Map 3 Showing geographical relationships of Proptsburg and Propst Corner (at Capito Hill Road) related to Mt. Zion Lutheran Church and Propst School

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- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.



Map 4 Photo Keyed Map

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Photographs

Photo Log

Name of Property: Mt. Zion Lutheran Church and Propst School

City or Vicinity: Franklin WV

County: Pendleton

State: WV

Photographer: Jeff Munn

Date Photographed: Aug 2025 – Mar 2026

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

1 of 12. Front (NW side) of Mt. Zion Church, camera pointing East

2 of 12. SW side of Church, camera pointing North

3 of 12. NE and SE sides of Church, also showing cedars and pines removed in Fall of 2025, camera pointing West

4 of 12. Inside of Church, camera pointing SE

5 of 12. Inside of Church, camera pointing NW. The glass is intact, shades are lowered in photo.

6 of 12. School NNW and NE sides, camera pointing SW

7 of 12. School NNW and SW sides, camera pointing SE

8 of 12. School NE and SE sides, camera pointing NW

9 of 12. Inside of School, camera pointing SE

10 of 12. Relationship of Church, School and outhouse on the site, camera pointing SW

11 of 12. Outhouse, camera pointing SW

12 of 12. Outhouse, inside, camera pointing S

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Figure Log

1 of 5. Group photo, ca 1916, of Propst School children and teachers inside Mt. Zion Lutheran. Camera pointing SE. Photo from the estate of Alda Simmons Berlin, photographer unknown.

2 of 5. Group photo, ca 1920s of Propst School children and teacher. Camera pointing SW. Photo from the estate of Alda Simmons Berlin, photographer unknown.

3 of 5. Earlier group photo, ca pre-1920 of Propst School children and teacher. Camera pointing SW. Photo from the estate of Alda Simmons Berlin, photographer unknown.

4. of 6. Propst School children and teachers at the Propst School. Ca about 1914?. Photo from the estate of Alda Simmons Berlin, photographer unknown.

5 of 6. Group photos, of Propst School children, families and teacher outside Mt. Zion Lutheran, probably taken at yearly end of school year gatherings. Dates unknown. Camera pointing NE. Photo from the estate of Alda Simmons Berlin, photographer unknown.

6 of 6. Photo of forest fire damage at N and E side of the Church. Camera pointing SW. Photo taken in March 2024 by Mark Rexrode, President of the Mt. Zion Lutheran Church Preservation Association of Dahmer.

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Photo 6

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Figure 1. Mt. Zion Lutheran with Propst School in front of it. Taken from adjacent property (Mitchell barn?) in foreground. Ca 1920s. Split rail fence lines Capito Hill Rd.

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Figure 2. Propst School children and teachers (John Dahmer top R) inside Mt. Zion Lutheran. Ca 1916. Photo from the estate of Alda Simmons Berlin, photographer unknown.

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Figure 3. Propst School children and teachers at the Propst School. Ca 1920s. Photo from the estate of Alda Simmons Berlin, photographer unknown.



Figure 4. Propst School children and teachers at the Propst School. Ca about 1914?. Photo from the estate of Alda Simmons Berlin, photographer unknown.

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Figure 5 (2 photos). Propst School children, families and teachers outside Mt. Zion Lutheran. Date unknown. Likely yearly end of school gatherings. Photo from the estate of Alda Simmons Berlin, photographer unknown.

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Figure 6. 2024 Fire damage on the outside at Mt. Zion Lutheran.

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for nominations to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.). We may not conduct or sponsor and you are not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number.

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for each response using this form is estimated to be between the Tier 1 and Tier 4 levels with the estimate of the time for each tier as follows:

Tier 1 – 60-100 hours
Tier 2 – 120 hours
Tier 3 – 230 hours
Tier 4 – 280 hours

The above estimates include time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and preparing and transmitting nominations. Send comments regarding these estimates or any other aspect of the requirement(s) to the Service Information Collection Clearance Officer, National Park Service, 1201 Oakridge Drive Fort Collins, CO 80525.