

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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DEC 12 1976

# 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 Bethany Church of Christ

AND/OR COMMON

Old Meetinghouse of the Bethany Church of Christ; Old Bethany Church (preferred)

**2 LOCATION**

STREET &amp; NUMBER

Main and Church Streets

\_\_\_ NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Bethany

\_\_\_ VICINITY OF

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT  
First

STATE

West Virginia

CODE

54

COUNTY

Brooke

CODE

009

**3 CLASSIFICATION****CATEGORY**

\_\_\_ DISTRICT  
 BUILDING(S)  
\_\_\_ STRUCTURE  
\_\_\_ SITE  
\_\_\_ OBJECT

**OWNERSHIP**

\_\_\_ PUBLIC  
 PRIVATE

\_\_\_ BOTH

**PUBLIC ACQUISITION**

\_\_\_ IN PROCESS  
\_\_\_ BEING CONSIDERED

**STATUS**

\_\_\_ OCCUPIED  
 UNOCCUPIED  
\_\_\_ WORK IN PROGRESS

**ACCESSIBLE**

YES: RESTRICTED  
\_\_\_ YES: UNRESTRICTED  
\_\_\_ NO

**PRESENT USE**

\_\_\_ AGRICULTURE \_\_\_ MUSEUM  
\_\_\_ COMMERCIAL \_\_\_ PARK  
\_\_\_ EDUCATIONAL \_\_\_ PRIVATE RESIDENCE  
\_\_\_ ENTERTAINMENT  RELIGIOUS  
\_\_\_ GOVERNMENT \_\_\_ SCIENTIFIC  
\_\_\_ INDUSTRIAL \_\_\_ TRANSPORTATION  
\_\_\_ MILITARY \_\_\_ OTHER:

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME Bethany Memorial Church of Christ

STREET &amp; NUMBER

Main Street (P.O. Box 149)

CITY, TOWN

Bethany

\_\_\_ VICINITY OF

STATE  
West Virginia**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Brooke County Courthouse

STREET &amp; NUMBER

632 Main Street

CITY, TOWN

Wellsburg

STATE  
West Virginia**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

DATE

\_\_\_ FEDERAL \_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_ COUNTY \_\_\_ LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

# 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

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## DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Old Meetinghouse of the Bethany Church of Christ is a rectangular brick building which sits atop a foundation of coursed field stone and cut sandstone, much of which was salvaged from the first Bethany church which was constructed around 1830. Its front is two bays wide, and its sides are five bays long. This one-story building has a gable roof of moderate pitch. Overall symmetry is especially emphasized in fenestration, but most elements attest to this attribute, including the four chimneys which project from the roofline near the cornice on the north and south elevations (two on each side).

Simplicity of design and lack of ornamentation give the old church a seeming purity in lines. The fine brickwork which extends from foundation to the tops of the gables is broken regularly. On the west (front) elevation are two four-panel doors with eight-light (4/4) transoms topped by plain stone lintels. Each side has five high windows; these have 12/12 double-hung sash of clear panes with plain stone lintels and lug sills. To the rear are two windows similar to those on the sides and placed symmetrically with the entrance doors. Between the windows on this elevation, and extending through the foundation to the ground, is a wooden door which leads to the crawl space beneath the building. The cornices are boxed, and there are returns on east and west sides. The only detail which now stands out as unique is the semi-circular stone plaque in the west gable which includes the words "Bethany Church of Christ" and the dates "1831-1852" (this was added after construction).

As with the exterior, there is a certain attractiveness in the simplicity and plainness of the interior design. A front hall or vestibule is across the entire entrance, and two interior doors (in line with the main doors) lead into the sanctuary which occupies the remainder of the building. The original box pews are arranged so that there is a double section in the center of the interior flanked by aisles with single sections to the sides. At the front, between the entrance doors, is a raised platform on which is placed a pulpit. The four chimneys appear as slight projections from the north and south walls and serve as the exhausts for the four pot-bellied stoves which heat the structure. Electricity has been added, and there are now four chandeliers (gas/electric) which hang from the ceiling over the main aisles, with a single outlet above the pulpit.

Few alterations have been made since the church was constructed; certainly none have been of major consequence to the appearance. Lighting by electricity was added, the exterior portions of the chimneys may have been changed slightly or rebuilt, the old metal roof has been replaced with a composition shingle, and a wooden cupola which was on the ridge line above the west gable (probably not part of the original building but added somewhat later to house the church bell) has been removed. Even with these minor changes, however, the old Bethany Church stands today about as it did in 1852.

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES      1852

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The old meetinghouse of the Bethany Church of Christ stands as a landmark in the development and evolution of a religious sect known as the Disciples of Christ (Christians). The Disciples owe much in their background to Alexander Campbell, a man who settled in the area around what became Bethany, Virginia, in 1811. It was here that Campbell formulated ideas and doctrines based on his reading and understanding of the Bible, published the Christian Baptist and later the Millennial Harbinger, founded and became first president of Bethany College, taught and preached, and saw a community grow. The old church was the second at Bethany, and it was here that a large number of ministers in the Christian Church were ordained. Although the Campbell family was the leading force in the community and church, many other notables in the Disciples movement served as minister, including Charles Louis Loos, W.H. Woolery, Archibald McLean and W.K. Pendleton. The building itself stands as witness to the attractiveness that simplicity in design can offer and speaks of the puritanism of the group which worshipped here.

Alexander Campbell was born in Ireland, but he emigrated to the United States in 1809, following his father, Thomas, who had come over in 1807 to take up the ministry in western Pennsylvania as a Seceder Presbyterian. Differences with the Seceders on questions of doctrine soon led father and son into independency, and Alexander was licensed to preach in 1811 by the Christian Association of Washington (Pennsylvania), a group which had set about erecting a meetinghouse at Brush Run, just east of the Virginia-Pennsylvania border.

The younger Campbell married on March 12, 1811, and he and his wife went to live with her parents at their home along Buffalo Creek, near the present town of Bethany, West Virginia. Here began the settling of what became the life-long home of Alexander and the fountainhead of his preaching, teaching and publishing activities. After several years of relationship with Baptist organizations, Mr. Campbell helped establish a separate congregation, constituted as a church of Christ, at Wellsburg (a few miles northwest of Bethany). By 1826 the Baptist associations were cutting off churches of Christ or Disciples, so the latter became, for all practical purposes, a separate denomination. Alexander Campbell was at their head and led in the formulation of religious principles.

Around 1829 there was a sufficiently large group of Disciples at Bethany to warrant the organizing of a congregation. Because of the prominence of Alexander Campbell, the church here occupied a position of prestige from the earliest days. The first meetinghouse in the community was built about 1830 and replaced after 1850, when the old meetinghouse which still stands became the center of denominational importance. It was used regularly until about 1915 and even after that once a year when candidates for the Christian ministry were ordained by the Board of Elders.

Alexander Campbell remained the most prominent figure within the church until his death in 1866, and he, along with a long list of notables as regular pastors and distinguished visitors, frequently led the congregations at Bethany. The founding and chartering of Bethany College in 1840 under Campbell's guidance added



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to the prominence of the community and its church, and many young men would enter the ministry of the Disciples after study at the college and some preaching at the meetinghouse. In addition, many of the school's presidents and faculty had strong associations with the Bethany church.

Among the ministers at the old meetinghouse besides Alexander Campbell were Charles Louis Loos, W.H. Woolery, Archibald McLean and William K. Pendleton. Loos was a professor of Latin and Greek at Bethany College and later became president of Eureka College and Kentucky University (Transylvania College). Woolery was professor of Latin and Hebrew at the college and later became its president. McLean, too, was a president of Bethany College, and Pendleton held that position after Alexander Campbell. William K. Pendleton also represented his senatorial district at the West Virginia Constitutional Convention of 1872 and was elected State Superintendent of Schools, a position he held along with his college duties from 1876 until 1881.

With the death of Campbell in 1866, the first phase of Disciple history came to a close. It was a period of creative challenge, debate and crystallization, and ended with the movement on a firm footing as a viable institution for the conservation and propagation of a reform doctrine. From 1866 to about 1890, a vigorous outgrowth and widespread influence was attained as Bethany men went out as ministers, founders of colleges and teachers. Churches and membership grew along the lines and upon the principles enunciated by the Campbells. Among the hundreds of ministers who received training at Bethany and had an association with the Bethany Church of Christ were John P. McGarvey, E.V. Zollars, Moses E. Lard, Isaac Errett, Burris Jenkins, Herbert L. Willett, Sherman Kirk, Edwin Errett and George Muckley. The list certainly goes on, but the old meetinghouse's place in the community was much lessened when a newer, larger edifice was built in 1914.

The old meetinghouse reflects the early Disciple movement in many ways, and the influence of Alexander Campbell and his teachings are evident in the building itself. Rather simple in design and construction with its plain lines, lack of ornamentation and puritan style, the arrangements of the services held here were a testament to society in general, the Disciples as a whole, and the Bethany community in particular. Straight-backed, wooden box pews and a simple raised platform with pulpit made up the interior furnishings, there was a separation of the sexes during worship services until 1910 (women on the north and men on the south of the partition in the center section of pews), no choir or instrumental music was present until about the 1880s, and so on. Of course, much of this was not peculiar to the Disciples of Christ, but the picture represents a time when religious activities formed the basis of one's life to a much greater extent than is generally true today.

Alexander Campbell's prominence and bearing permeate the denomination, and his teachings, writings, preachings and debates during the extensive travels of his lifetime brought him into contact--and friendship--with many of the great men of America's pre-Civil War period. Certainly he took his place among these, and his

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influence spread far beyond the community in Bethany. The old meetinghouse in which he played a great part remains today as a landmark which further attests to a maturing and broadening in that part of the history of the United States in which this man and his successors deserve continued recognition.

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES (continued)

Stevenson, Dwight E. The History of the Bethany Church of Christ. Bethany, W.Va.: N.p., 1940.