

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 NCRS use only

received

MAR 27 1981

date entered

Substantive Review

## 1. Name

historic Trinity Memorial Methodist Episcopal Church

and/or common Trinity Methodist Church

## 2. Location

street & number 420 Ben Street \_\_\_ not for publication

city, town Clarksburg \_\_\_ vicinity of congressional district

state West Virginia code 54 county Harrison code 033

## 3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational	<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> religious ( <i>former use</i> )
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <i>N/A</i> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other: <i>unoccupied</i>

## 4. Owner of Property

name Dr. Carl Walker

street & number 38 Blueledge Drive

city, town Roslyn Dale \_\_\_ vicinity of state Mass. 02131

## 5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Harrison County Courthouse

street & number 301 W. Main Street

city, town Clarksburg state West Virginia 26301

## 6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Clarksburg Downtown Survey has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date 1981  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records Alan Carney, A.I.A.; Historic Preservation Unit

city, town The Cultural Center, Charleston state West Virginia 25305

## 7. Description

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site	
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved	date <u>N/A</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed			

### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Trinity Methodist Church (1902) is a late-Victorian Gothic-Romanesque-style brick structure of modest dimension and local distinction. Its siting, on Ben Street near the intersection with Lee Avenue, is at the heart of Clarksburg's historic black community. The structure is prominent in the streetscape due to its height, massing and brick and stone textures that contrasts with the ordinary frame architecture of the neighborhood composed of 1-story cottages and 2-story foursquares. While the church building may be viewed as a relatively common architectural type or genre expression popular with Protestant denominations at the turn of the century, Trinity Methodist Church is distinctive in its local context and almost certainly the statement of a professional designer, though the architect's identity is not presently known.

The building is 2-story rectangle with a steeply pitched, slate-covered gable roof. The entrance elevation is richly appointed with limestone banding, brick hoodmoulds and stone labels that accent the Gothic openings of the two principal doorways and second story major pointed-arch windows. Two towers dominate the entrance facade and divide between them the major architectural features of the building.

The square bell tower, three stories in height, features an open belfry with Gothic-style louvered openings (2 per side). The pyramidal roof is slate covered and is crowned with a metal cap and ball finial. A diminutive wooden wheel window is centered in the face of the tower between the second story window and tower cornice.

The lesser tower, actually a pavilion with a pyramidal roof, is a counterpoint to the bell tower; it houses a secondary entrance. Engaged brick buttresses here and on the main tower provide additional Gothic elements in the facade.

### Condition and Integrity

There are no significant alterations or additions at Trinity Methodist that impair the structure's original design features. The major concern, however, is the building's integrity that is jeopardized by years of accelerating deterioration. (The building was closed in 1965.) The evidence of severe decline in the building's structural and historical fabric is apparent, even from the street. This extreme deterioration is caused by the penetration of the elements through the roof, eaves and open windows whose sashes were broken out years ago. Bird infestation and vegetation damage from clinging vines and plants growing from the gutters, is substantial.

Interest in rehabilitation and adaptive reuse of Trinity Methodist by the owner has been expressed. The idea of the owner that the building might be used as a neighborhood recreation center for youths has been shared with the

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City of Clarksburg. Plans, specifications and funding for such a venture have not been produced, however, to date. The building's advanced deterioration has resulted nevertheless, in the loss of or damage to significant architectural features, including doors, window sash and frames, exterior wooden eaves and cornices, and roofing material that is missing or too deteriorated to be preserved. Interior plaster, ornamental ceiling fabric and flooring systems will have to be replaced or rebuilt.

## 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900–	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other (specify) Black history

**Specific dates** 1902; 1902-1965 **Builder/Architect** Unknown

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Trinity Methodist Church is significant because of the role it has played as a focal point of the religious and social affairs of the black community of Clarksburg, Harrison County, West Virginia, during the years of the building's active service, 1902-1965; and survives as a locally significant architectural landmark in the center of a neighborhood composed of low density frame one and 2-story cottages and foursquare-style houses.

Harrison County's Negro population was never large, according to historian Dorothy Davis, because Harrison County's terrain was better suited to subsistence farming than it was to large-scale operations which would have been labor intensive. Consequently, most blacks in the region worked as house servants or labored in small, local businesses during the period prior to the Civil War. The population of the black community in Harrison County between 1890 and 1910 ranged from a 590 in 1890 to 481 in 1910. (The population greatly expanded after 1920). It is important to note that from this modest population a group of black Methodists were successful in their efforts to raise the necessary funds to build a sizeable brick house of worship that was finer than any heretofore commissioned by blacks in Harrison County. Subsequently the building assumed the role as a prominent place of fellowship and a center of black community and social activity; it remained for years a symbol of black pride in Clarksburg.

Prior to the Civil War, there was no black Church in Clarksburg, but special provision was made in the Methodist Church for the seating of black members. Conference records of 1850 show that nineteen Negroes belonged to the Methodist Episcopal Church in Clarksburg. Shortly after the Civil War ended, a few of the freed slaves of Clarksburg gathered together, at first where ever they could, to praise God for their deliverance from bondage.

In the words of an early historian, "The Lord heard their petitions and prayers of Thanksgiving and comforted them, giving them grace to keep them in the hours of their bitter trials". It is just such a period of trial and hardship that caused the idea for the founding of a church of their own to be born.

Among the early members of the group interested in founding a church were: Watt Colston, Charlotte Colston, Frank Sehon, Gabe Washington, Sarah Washington, Fred Sehon, Celiax Sehon, Phillis Henderson, Betty Brent, Hannon Grant, Patty Webbs, Polux Lowery, Nancy Mosby, Amelia Wilkes, Amintie Lipscomb, Catherine Lupton, William Lowery, Jack Holloway, Annie Freeman and Amelia Ann Holloway.

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

Carney, Alan, A.I.A. Inventory-Nomination Draft Form: "Trinity Methodist Church." Historic Preservation Unit, Department of Culture and History, Charleston, West Virginia, 1982.

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property .26 Acre

Quadrangle name Clarksburg, West Virginia

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UMT References

A 

1	7	5	5	7	2	4	0	4	3	4	7	4	8	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

B 

Zone		Easting				Northing							

C 

Zone		Easting				Northing							

D 

Zone		Easting				Northing							

E 

Zone		Easting				Northing							

F 

Zone		Easting				Northing							

G 

Zone		Easting				Northing							

H 

Zone		Easting				Northing							

Verbal boundary description and justification

The nominated property situated on west side of Ben Street in the City of Clarksburg, Harrison County, West Virginia, adjacent to Water Street, is 163' - 0" x 70' - 0". Deed Book 228 - Page 396. Lot no. 300, Assessor of Harrison County, Map no. 24, Sept., 1960.

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

state	N/A	code	county	code
state		code	county	code

state		code	county	code
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# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Rodney S. Collins, Architectural Historian

Historic Preservation Unit

organization Department of Culture and History date November 15, 1983

street & number Cultural Center, Capitol Complx telephone 304/ 348-0240

city or town Charleston state West Virginia 25305

# 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 State Historic Preservation Officer

date March 21, 1984

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

date 4/26/1984

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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Mrs. Sarah Lottier, who in the nineteen thirties could remember the "Old Brick" church built in 1822 and who attended Sunday School held in the courthouse while Goff Chapel was being constructed, said that after the Civil War the Negroes organized a church and held services in Judge Lee's carriage house. Mrs. Lottier, who had in days of slavery belonged to Colonel Robert W. Moore, said that out of the meetings in the carriage house grew Trinity Methodist Church. Watt Colston preached the gospel to the group and conducted the funerals.

Later meetings were held in the Court House, as the carriage house became too small to accommodate the crowds. Chaplain Nixon helped in conducting services, being followed by a Rev. Mr. Smith. At the Court House meetings, many were converted and won to Christ through the preaching of the above named ministers.

Later, in the course of events, Mrs. Bib Ann Lowery opened her home to the group, including the new converts, and in her home the first Negro Church of Clarksburg, which is now known as Trinity Methodist Church, was organized in 1866.

After the organization of the church, the meetings were held alternately at the school on Water Street and in the home of Moses Miller.

The Rev. Nathaniel Brown conducted the meetings and again many new converts were won. Robert Steele, a tanner, attended these meetings as a local preacher and was invited to conduct services when an ordained minister could not be obtained. It was he who conceived the idea of a church building which was built on Water Street around 1870, but before the building could be completed the members were worshipping in it with planks for seats.

The former tanner went to conference and was ordained, later becoming the first pastor of the Water Street church. Mrs. Pollux Lowery was appointed the first class leader. The first "Mite Society" was organized in the church to help defray the expenses of maintenance. Mrs. Eliza Sehon was its treasurer.

In 1902, during the pastorate of the Rev. John M. Beane, the church was constructed on the present site on Ben Street. The present parsonage was built during the pastorate of the Rev. Ely Lofton. The Ben Street church was used continuously until June 1965, when the Methodist Conference merged the Trinity and the Broad Oaks congregations and closed the Trinity Church building.

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Architecture

The Revival styles were late to arrive in the rural areas, sometimes a decade or so. This is evident in Trinity Memorial Methodist Episcopal Church of Clarksburg, which is a Gothic-Romanesque Revival hybrid, encompassing the following Victorian Gothic (1860-1890) features: decorative stone bands, Gothic (pointed arch) window openings lintel-type sashes, relieving arches. The most distinguishing feature of the Victorian Gothic style is the diverse exterior finish. Materials of differing textures are juxtaposed, creating decorative bands highlighting corners, arches and arcades. Straight-headed openings are used in addition to traditional Gothic (pointed arch) windows and doors.

The following Romanesque Revival (1840-1900) features are also applicable: gabled roof tower with pyramidal roof, wall buttress, corbel table, spandrel, pier, compound arch, hood mold with corbel stop, pronounced archivolt trim, and molded impost course. The arch is used decoratively to enrich corbel tables along the eaves and belt or string courses marking horizontal divisions. Facades are flanked by square towers of differing heights and covered with pyramidal roof shapes. The entire composition is dignified; it is an expression of Gothicism in a modest setting of small frame houses that is significant for its place and time.

#9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Broad Oakes United Methodist Church - 75th Anniversary (1903-1978) Bulletin

Davis, Dorothy History of Harrison County (McClain Printing Company 1970)  
pp. 78-79; 570-571.

Haymond, Henry History of Harrison County (Acme Publishing Company 1910)  
(Reprinted by McClain Printing Company 1973).

One Hundred & Fifty Years of Methodism in Clarksburg - 1788-1939 Book No. W 287.6.