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United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

SEP 25 1989

National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form

NATIONAL  
REGISTER

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name St. John's Episcopal Church  
other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_

2. Location

street & number 1105 Quarrier Street  not for publication  
city, town Charleston  vicinity  
state West Virginia code WV county Kanawha code WV 039 zip code 25301

3. Classification

Ownership of Property

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing
<u>1</u>	_____ buildings
_____	_____ sites
_____	_____ structures
_____	_____ objects
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing:  
N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this  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  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.  See continuation sheet.

Signature of certifying official [Signature]

Date 9/15/89

State or Federal agency and bureau \_\_\_\_\_

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.  See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

State or Federal agency and bureau \_\_\_\_\_

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register.  See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register.  See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register.
- removed from the National Register.
- other, (explain:) \_\_\_\_\_

Patrick Andrew

11/2/89

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

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**6. Function or Use**

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Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Religious structure - church

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Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Religious structure - church

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Social - civic (Parish House wings)

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**7. Description**

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Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

Late 19th century Gothic Revival

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Victorian

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Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation stone: sandstone

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walls stone: sandstone, quarry face

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roof wood construction, slate shingles

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other patterned gray slate

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**Describe present and historic physical appearance.**

St. John's Church, located on the corner of Quarrier and Broad Street, is one of Charleston's finest Victorian Gothic structures. The well-preserved church complex is actually made up of two separate constructions. First, in 1883, Philadelphia architect Isaac Pursell designed the towered sandstone church. The Parish House was designed in 1927 by the Charleston, W.Va., firm of Warne, Tucker, Silling & Hutchison. This sensitive addition is regarded as an early attempt, in southern West Virginia, to preserve the integrity of an historic structure. The Parish House wings are designed to expand the usable space without diminishing the work of master architect Isaac Pursell. The addition blends visually with Pursell's church by utilizing the same quarry-faced sandstone. Also, it has been positioned in such a way that three sides of Pursell's design are left open to full view.

St. John's Church, built in 1884-90, and consecrated on June 9, 1901, is a modified cruciform plan constructed of random-coursed rough sandstone with banding of smooth-faced sandstone. The heavy Romanesque corner bell tower is in pleasing contrast with the church's Gothic windows and roofline. The corner buttressing, pointed arch windows and doors, and raised entrance under the bell tower all contribute to the Gothic design of St. John's. In keeping with the Victorian style, the slate roof is decorated with patterned bands of hexagonal slates.

The most outstanding interior feature of St. John's Church is the fine wooden rib-vaulted ceiling (open-truss roof structure). The open-truss work is punctuated by large expanses of tongue-and-groove wood construction. The Gothic pointed arch is used extensively throughout the interior repeating the shape of the church's stained-glass windows. The early memorial windows, designed by Charles Hogeman of New Jersey, are a combination of painted and stained glass. They are rich in colour and Victorian detail. Later, in the 1970's, new windows were installed in the Memorial Chapel. Other Gothic features include wooden tracery around the organ loft and wooden Gothic altars and rails in both the Memorial Chapel and the main church. The original lighting fixtures were replaced in the early part of this century. Some notable pieces of church furniture are an eagle-shaped memorial lectern to Alexander Quarrier, and an 1830 altar table which is the only remnant of the previous St. John's church.

The Parish House wings, begun in 1928, reflect a later architectural treatment but are outstanding in their attempt to reflect and maintain the architectural integrity of Pursell's design. The addition utilizes the same shapes and finishes as the church;

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St. John's Episcopal Church

however, the addition is rather less Gothic in detail with its utilitarian rectangular windows. To maintain the clarity of Pursell's design, a visual separation was created between the church and the extension. Even though the addition is massive, the architect's sensitive positioning of the wings maintains full view of the three remaining sides of Pursell's church.

St. John's Episcopal Church is a late 19th-century non-academic Gothic example more characteristic of non-liturgical sects than of Episcopalian churches of the period, according to Denys Peter Myers, architectural historian with the Historic American Building Survey, who has evaluated the building. The tall corner tower, in the words of Myers, "has a stair turret and is conspicuous for the stone spire and four corbelled stone spirelets that give it a rather top-heavy and ponderous appearance. The roofs are extremely steep." St. John's is the only church in Charleston with a stone belfry and spire.

The church and additions are in excellent repair. Although the church was originally designed to be built in brick, it is nevertheless a fine example of Victorian Gothic architecture. The integrity of the building has been maintained and few alterations have been made. The church's proportions are good and the craftsmanship is excellent. St. John's has been recorded by the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS), WV-215, with photographs (1979) and data (1981).

**8. Statement of Significance**

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally  statewide  locally

Applicable National Register Criteria  A  B  C  D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions)  A  B  C  D  E  F  G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Religion

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Period of Significance

1883-1928

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Significant Dates

1883-84

1890; 1901

1928

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Significant Person

Alexander T. Laidley

Architect/Builder

Isaac Pursell, architect

Warne, Tucker, Silling and Hutchison,

architects (parish house)

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

St. John's Episcopal Church is eligible for listing in the National Register because it derives primary significance from architectural qualities which are of exceptional importance in Charleston, West Virginia. The church is also eligible under Criterion C because it represents the work of a master. Under Criterion A the church qualifies by reason of its association with historically important events and processes significant to the Kanawha Valley and West Virginia.

St. John's Church was designed by a prominent Philadelphia architect Isaac Pursell (1853-1910). When St. John's was constructed, it was one of the choicest buildings in Charleston. The church also occupies a very prominent street corner in downtown Charleston, at Broad Street and Quarrier Street.

St. John's is one of two known West Virginia churches designed by Pursell. The other, the wood frame Tygarts Valley Presbyterian Church in Huttonsville, has massing similar to St. John's. Pursell is also the architect of some well-known churches in Philadelphia. The following is an excerpt from Withey's Biographical Dictionary of American Architects (deceased):

PURSELL, ISAAC (1853 8/9/1910) Philadelphia, Pa. (A.I.A.)

A native of Trenton, N.J., the youth attended public schools and received an architectural training in the Philadelphia offices of the late Samuel Sloan. In practice for himself in subsequent years, Mr. Pursell was most successful in designing churches, and during the late nineteenth century prepared plans for a number of well-known ecclesiastical buildings in Philadelphia. Notable examples of these were the Christ Reformed Church at Chester and 43rd Street; St. Matthews' Lutheran; St. Paul's Reformed Episcopal; The Calvary Methodist in

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

Jefferds, Joseph C., Jr. A History of St. John's Episcopal Church, Charleston, West Virginia. Charleston, West Virginia, 1976.

\_\_\_\_\_. St. John's Episcopal Church: A Sesquicentennial Tour. Charleston, West Virginia, 1987.

Hamilton, Eleanor Meyer. The Flair and the Fire. Charleston, West Virginia: Crowder Publishing Co., 1977.

Myers, Denys Peter. Architectural Data Form, Historic American Buildings Survey (WV-215), U.S. Department of the Interior, 2/10/81.

See continuation sheet

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 # WV-215
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository: \_\_\_\_\_

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreage of property 1 acre approximately

UTM References

A 17 444760 42443000  
 Zone Easting Northing

C \_\_\_\_\_

B \_\_\_\_\_  
 Zone Easting Northing

D \_\_\_\_\_

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The church is located at the southeast corner of Broad and Quarrier Streets, in downtown Charleston, within a 225-foot square beginning at the corner of Broad and Quarrier where the curb and streets intersect.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The nominated property constitutes the entire lot historically associated with St. John's Church and parish house since 1928.

See continuation sheet

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Pamela Maxfield-Ontko; Rodney Collins, W.V. Dept. of Culture & History  
 organization Univ. of Charleston - Historic Preservation date 3/11/89  
 street & number Box 60 telephone 548-6474  
 city or town Clay state West Virginia zip code 25043

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Germantown, 1892; St. Paul's Presbyterian; Moravian Church of the Holy Trinity, 1879; Bethany Tabernacle, and Christ Protestant Episcopal. Mr. Purcell also designed churches in other cities, including the Second Presbyterian Church in Knoxville, Tenn., a number of hospitals in New Jersey and at Haddonfield, N.J., the first Presbyterian Church, one of his late works.

St. John's Church, and the more recent Parish House, remain distinctive structures in the Charleston area. The early 20th-century Parish House has been beautifully integrated into the design of the late-Victorian Gothic church. Both structures have been well-maintained. The interior of St. John's nave is exceptionally impressive with its wooden rib-vaulted ceiling. The altar area retains most of its original floor tiles, and the choir stalls are currently being restored to the area. However, painted Gothic borders, which once decorated the walls on either side of the altar, have been painted over in recent years. But, for the most part, the church is very much as it was when first constructed.

The churches tall corner tower features a monumental stone spire, with stone spirelets, that is unique in Charleston. With the steep Gothic gables, geometrically patterned gray slate roof, and sandstone bearing walls supporting an open-truss roof structure, St. John's remains one of the city's oldest church buildings and finest expressions of late 19th-century Gothic architecture.

Eleanor Meyer Hamilton, historian of the Episcopal Church in West Virginia, relates that St. John's is "the grand old mother church of all the Episcopal Churches in the Charleston area, with St. Mark's at St. Albans having a separate history of early development." In her book, The Flair and the Fire, Hamilton records the following:

Dr. Roller was very much alive to the demand for missions in the outlying areas of Charleston. St. Matthew's came into being in 1892, and St. Andrew's in 1894. St. Stephen's on Len's Creek began in 1895, and St. James' in 1896, St. James for the colored people having their services on Sunday afternoons in the chapel at St. John's. St. Luke's was similarly started by people from St. John's, being originally called the "House of Prayer." St. John's operated a Sunday School in Kanawha City for several years, but the work there did not long endure. In later years, St. John's fostered Church of the Good Shepherd in Kanawha City.

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In addition to extensive mission work, St. John's parish, originally called Kanawha Parish, was an early leader in the establishment of a separate diocese for western Virginia. Following creation of the State of West Virginia during the Civil War (1863), the movement advocating a new diocese, separate from the Virginia diocese, gained momentum. This culminated in the creation of a new West Virginia Diocese, which was approved by the churches' General Convention in Boston in 1877. The diocese's Primary Convention met at St. John's in Charleston on December 5, 1877. Prominence of St. John's is evidenced by the Diocesan Convention of 1890, which met in the present building. It is interesting to note that the Centennial Diocesan Convention, of 1977, was also hosted by St. John's.

Alexander T. Laidley, a prominent member of St. John's Church in the early 1880's, and a leader involved in the movement to bring about the division in the Virginia Diocese, wrote the history of the formation of the Diocese of West Virginia and sent the account to The Church Cyclopedia, A Dictionary of Church Doctrine, History, Organization and Ritual. The large book, published in Philadelphia in 1884 was "designed especially for the use of the laity of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America."

In addition to Criteria A and C, St. John's Episcopal Church is eligible for listing in the National Register under Criterion B because it is associated with the life of Alexander T. Laidley, a person significant in the history of the church during its period of significance, and an individual who played important roles within the community and state.

The history of St. John's Church, as recorded in Joseph C. Jefferds, Jr.'s A History of St. John's Episcopal Church, one of West Virginia's most distinguished church histories, records the names of many Charleston luminaries. Among these prominent church members are Rev. James Craik, D.D., LL.D., whose father was George Washington's secretary during the president's second term, and whose grandfather was Dr. James Craik, personal physician to George Washington; George S. Patton, a Confederate brigadier general and grandfather of World War II general George S. Patton; Dr. Spicer Patrick, a noted Charleston businessman; and Judge George W. Summers. While these important parishoners were not associated with the present building, another, Alexander T. Laidley (1807-1895), was.

Alexander T. Laidley, writes Jefferds, "was a most important part of St. John's Parish from his election to the Vestry in 1854 until his death." Cited no less than 21 times in the church history, Laidley served as church warden, registrar, and treasurer for long periods of time. Laidley's vestry minutes provide fascinating late 19th-century glimpses of church, parish, and community life. Following construction of the present building, Laidley renewed his service to the church with election to the vestry in 1885. Subsequent to service as warden, 1888-92, Laidley was elected Honorary Vestryman for Life in 1892. A prayer desk, given to the church in 1912, honors the memory of Alexander T. Laidley and his son, Richard.

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Laidley served with distinction as clerk of various West Virginia counties before and after statehood, and as commissioner of Chancery in Kanawha. W.S. Laidley, in his History of Charleston and Kanawha County, states that Laidley had the reputation of being the best clerk in Virginia.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Hardesty's West Virginia Counties. Richwood, W.Va.; Jim Comstock, 1974.

Laidley, W.S. History of Charleston and Kanawha County, West Virginia. Chicago, Ill.: Richmond-Arnold Publishing Co., 1911.