

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	MAY 19 1975
DATE ENTERED	JUN 27 1975

**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

Buckhorn Presbyterian Church and the Greer Gymnasium

AND/OR COMMON

Buckhorn Lake Area Church and the Greer Gymnasium

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Buckhorn

STATE

Kentucky

___ VICINITY OF

CODE
021

___ NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

7

COUNTY

Perry

CODE

193

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE	
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Buckhorn Presbytery

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Buckhorn

___ VICINITY OF

Kentucky

STATE

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Perry County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Hazard

Kentucky

STATE

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

Survey of Historic Sites in Kentucky

DATE

1971

___ FEDERAL STATE ___ COUNTY ___ LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

Kentucky Heritage Commission

CITY, TOWN

Frankfort

STATE

Kentucky

7 DESCRIPTION

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

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Buckhorn Lake Area Church and the Greer Gymnasium are located in the small mountain community of Buckhorn, approximately 30 miles northeast of Hazard, Kentucky, and at the head of the Middle Fork of the Kentucky River on Squabble Creek. Startling in size, the Church is constructed entirely of hewn logs. The exterior is characterized by a series of recessed and projecting areas which relieve the horizontal lines of the logs and white chinking. The center portion of the facade is recessed slightly and contains the entranceway and large multipaned window overhead. The doorway, the windows, and the bell tower openings are unusual in that they are all triple recessed insets. The upper portions of the openings are stepped, again relieving the horizontal lines of the logs.

On the south side is the large bell tower capped by a pyramidal roof and small cross. Clusters of four logends form dentils under the roof. The recessed central panels of the tower walls leave pilaster or buttress strips rising from the ground and joining over the deeply recessed belfry openings. There is a clere-story with four bays and, on the lower half of the side wall, four larger windows with buttresslike projections in between. The windows once contained amber hand-blown glass panes but have since been replaced.

Attached to the north side of the Church is a small one-story community building used for Sunday School and the main Sunday services during the winter months (the main sanctuary is unheated).

On entering one finds a small lobby with doors on each end of the wall facing the entrance. The upper half of this wall has opaqued glass.

The ceiling of the sanctuary is extremely high. The beams and supports are exposed, giving the interior a somewhat medieval appearance. A gallery is located on the south end above the lobby with circular cut-out detail on the railing. The north end of the building contains the pulpit, choir loft, and a large pipe organ.

The Greer Gymnasium, located to the rear (east) of the Church, is of hewn logs, five bays in width, with three dormer windows on each side of the roof. The roof extends slightly over the entrance supported by brackets and log pilasters. Large brackets, widely spaced, are also found under the north-south ends of the roof.

In recent years, a long cement block extension has been added to the north end below ground level. Since the original 1927 construction, the interior has been greatly altered, but the exterior remains relatively unchanged.

(Continued)

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input 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 **1927-Gymnasium**
1928-Church BUILDER/ARCHITECT **Edward F. Greer, Architect**

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

In the isolated mountain community of Buckhorn are located the **Buckhorn Lake Area Church** and the **Greer Gymnasium**, survivals of a complex of buildings constructed between 1903 and 1928, which once included a hospital, orphanage, kindergarten, elementary and secondary schools, and dormitories. Although the success of the Church and its associated humanitarian activities was the direct result of the labor and vision of Presbyterian minister Harvey Murdoch, and the generosity of Eastern seaboard patrons, these unusually large and handsome log structures can also be said to have a much wider significance. They symbolize an era in this mountainous region when the people were characterized by an individualism, an independence, and a perseverance in making real a better life for themselves and their children. They shared Murdoch's dream and by their assistance and continued support demonstrated a very deep devotion and dedication to humanitarian purpose.

The history of the church goes back to 1902 and to Harvey Murdoch (1871-1935), a young minister then serving as assistant in the LaFayette Avenue Presbyterian Church in Brooklyn, New York. A native of Mississippi and graduate of Colorado State College and Princeton Theological Seminary, Murdoch was greatly moved by the needs of Appalachian people expressed by visiting minister, Dr. E. O. Guerrant from Lexington, Kentucky, who had organized a few years previous the nondenominational Society of the Soul Winners for the purpose of establishing missions in the mountains of Tennessee and Kentucky. With the financial support of his Brooklyn church, Murdoch accepted the position of Field Secretary of the Society of the Soul Winners and made his way south. His job was to visit the Society's outposts in the mountains, one of which was at Buckhorn where he met Miles Saunders and his daughter Louise (later to become Mrs. Murdoch), who worked in the area during the summers, holding church services in tents and at a small chapel just erected on Laurel Point (named Louise Chapel in honor of Miss Saunders). Murdoch saw a vital need to establish a church and a school in the region and Buckhorn offered certain advantages as a site, namely that it was equidistant from four county seats and could draw students from the entire south-eastern region of Kentucky. In 1902 he met with the heads of families in the community and discussed the erection of a Christian college. The people were interested and, although most were too poor to give money, "they subscribed four hundred logs, twelve thousand feet of lumber, all the shingles to cover all

(Continued)

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Cornett, William T. Letcher County, Kentucky. Prestonsburg: State-wide Printing Co., 1967.

Jessen, Timothy. "A Brief Historical Sketch of the Presbyterian Church at Buckhorn, Kentucky." 1968.

Kirby, Agnes Gabbard. "Communities and Their Growth." Perry County History. Louisville: The Courier-Journal, 1954. (continued)

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 5 acres

UTM REFERENCES

A 17 | 280710 | 4136140
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

WPT OR NF

B _____ | _____ | _____
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Gloria Mills, Staff Historian

ORGANIZATION

Kentucky Heritage Commission

DATE

March 10, 1975

STREET & NUMBER

401 Wapping Street

TELEPHONE

(502) 564-4476

CITY OR TOWN

Frankfort

STATE

Kentucky

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 National Park Service.

SIGNATURE

Eldred W. Melton

TITLE

State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE

5/12/75

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

DATE

6/27/75

ATTEST:

Ronald M. Greenberg

DATE

6-26-75

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

[Signature]

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In the isolated mountain town of Buckhorn, in a narrow valley deep within the ridges of the Cumberlands, the Church is by far the most dominant structure in the community. It is located in the center of a valley at the junction of Highway 28 and Main Str, adjacent to a bridge crossing Squabble Creek. The high mass of the Church parallels the other structures in the community but the tower provides an effective vertical accent around which the life of the town circulates. The low slope of the main (nave) roof (belying the height within), the slope of the wide aisle roofs, and the pyramidal roof of the tower harmonize with the hillsides against which they are seen.

The one-story parsonage is to the immediate south of the community building, the gymnasium across a small creek to the rear of the Church. A few residences are located across the street facing the Church and its associated buildings.

The road circles the "campus" and the other buildings and houses located within the former Witherspoon College area.

The overall form of the Church is certainly medieval, with its tall nave, clerestory and side aisles, implied buttresses, spandrel openings, and belfry. The placement of the standard windows in the outer surface of the walls contrasts effectively with the deeper recesses on the front and upper tower, which suggest thicker, perhaps sturdier walls than those in which they are actually set.

At the same time, the treatment of the log construction and particularly the corbeled logends corresponding to the setbacks of the openings, evokes modern Scandinavian variants of revived Medieval design. One suspects that the reputed designer of the edifice, Edward F. Greer of Brooklyn, had a sophisticated awareness of current trends in European architecture, yet was able to adapt certain appropriate features in the exploitation of local Kentucky building materials and techniques.

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the buildings, coal enough to heat it 'for good, ' nine acres of land, \$150 in money, and 125 days in work." Brooklyn friends provided the necessary funds and the institution was constructed and completed by the fall of 1903. (Soul Winner, 1902, as quoted in Kirby, p. 72)

Called Witherspoon College, it **was** named for one of Murdoch's heroes, John Witherspoon, minister, schoolmaster, and former president of Princeton University. The school included only grades one through twelve and was not in fact a college. But Mr. Murdoch wisely recognized the need of the students--particularly those in their twenties and thirties--of having had the prestige of attending "a college" and thus deliberately chose the misnomer. Within two years the school had 187 students, with the enrollment continually expanding. "Our beautiful Louise Hall is already overcrowded," stated The Soul Winner in February 1905, "as many as five students in one room, and even then we are compelled to send students elsewhere for accommodations. We turn away students every day. We could easily fill another building the size of this. In fact, if we had the accommodations for them I believe we could get one hundred more boarders. The refectory is an attractive two story four room building." (Kirby, p. 73-74)

Within ten years the campus was almost unrecognizable, commented Dr. Guerrant in August 1914, after a visit to Buckhorn, "I could hardly believe it was the same place where dear Dr. Saunders and Miss Louise taught a score of children, under an old tent about a dozen years ago. Now a great institution fills the beautiful campus with twelve handsome buildings where 369 Highland lads and lassies are trained for time and eternity. . . .

"A thriving village surrounds the College where a few years ago 'Uncle Jimmie' Sandlin raised his corn and sweet potatoes. A church of 400 members. . . . a large college building, two large dormitories, a well furnished hospital, a children's home, and handsome buildings for a new kindergarten and manual training, and for the president, a church edifice, and one for teaching agriculture." (Kirby, p. 75)

Central to Murdoch's educational purposes, however, was the construction of a church. The first Buckhorn Presbyterian Church was organized in 1907 and a small meeting house was erected and used until the present sanctuary was constructed in 1927-28. Often called the "Log Cathedral," the church was built by local carpenters from a design by one of the members of the LaFayette Avenue Presbyterian Church in Brooklyn, Mr. Edward F. Greer. He and his wife also provided the financial aid needed for the completion of the building. Although the somewhat Scandinavian style is unusual for the region, it does not appear out of place with

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the forested hillsides rising sharply around the small mountain town. The high open-beam ceiling and the great spaciousness of the interior are impressive. The rich natural oak finish of the walls gives a warmth and identification with its rural, wooded surroundings.

The Church was large, built to accommodate a growing congregation that numbered 865 the year the new building was completed. It is said the Church contained the largest rural congregation of the synod of Kentucky and one of the largest in America. The influence of Murdoch and this Church had led to the founding, in May 1918, of the Presbytery of Buckhorn with 18 churches on the roll.

Succeeding Murdoch after his death in 1935 was Dr. Elmer Gabbard who had previously served as an associate minister at Buckhorn. It was under Gabbard's administration that the school in 1956 ceased taking boarding students and was turned over to the Perry County Board of Education. At this time, the orphanage became the Presbyterian Child Welfare Agency and is now considered a separate agency under the National Board of Missions.

Although the high school has since moved to a new location across the street, the gymnasium is still in use. The other log buildings, which included several dormitories, school buildings, and buildings associated with the orphanage, have all been destroyed by fire. The old Murdoch residence was recently razed to make room for the construction of other facilities. Thus only the gym and the church, the latest constructed of all the original log structures, remain. These particular sites, although not fifty years old, represent, therefore, a complex of similar buildings that go back as early as 1903. Also it should be considered that the area was late in developing and the town itself does not date much past Murdoch's first years in Buckhorn.

The complex of buildings associated with the old Witherspoon College has been of considerable importance to the people of the Buckhorn Lake area. It provided social services in the past where none previously were available and it continued to serve through the years as a religious, cultural, and social center. But the love and pride in the buildings, particularly the log church, elicited from the people encompasses more than a mere attachment by local citizens to a religious or educational institution. It is in essence an expression of pride and faith in themselves, a reaffirmation in a belief that from the harshest of circumstances something of worth and beauty can be created.

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