

YLR- 3/20/96
NRHP- 8/21/97

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 How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. 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. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historical name Epworth United Methodist Church

other names/site number VDHR File No. 122-178

2. Location

street & number 124 West Freemason Street not for publication N/A

city or town Norfolk vicinity N/A

state Virginia code VA county Norfolk (independent city) code 680 zip code 23510

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, 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 nationally statewide x locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

[Signature]
Signature of certifying official

May 5, 1997
Date

Virginia Department of Historic Resources

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting or other official _____ Date _____

State or Federal agency and bureau _____

4. 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): _____

Signature of Keeper Date of Action

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria (Mark "X" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- 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 (Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or a grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance 1894

Significant Dates 1894

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation N/A

Architect/Builder Carpenter, John Ruthven
Peebles, John Kevan

Narrative Statement of Significance (Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

- 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 # _____

Primary Location of Additional Data

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository: Sargent Memorial Room Newspaper Archives, Kirn Library, Norfolk, Virginia

=====
10. Geographical Data
=====

Acreage of Property 1.5 acres

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone Easting	Northing	Zone Easting	Northing
1	18	384880/4079000	2	
3			4	

 See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

=====
11. Form Prepared By
=====

name/title Dianne M. Ball

organization _____ date April 30, 1994

street & number 1608 Wake Forest Drive telephone 804-282-7307

city or town Richmond state VA zip code 23226

=====
Additional Documentation
=====

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

- A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

=====
Property Owner
=====

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name/title Epworth United Methodist Church

street & number 124 West Freemason Street telephone (804) 622-2970

city or town City of Norfolk state VA zip code 23510

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Epworth United Methodist Church
City of Norfolk, Virginia

Section number 7 Page 1

Summary Description

Epworth United Methodist Church is one of Norfolk's most prominent downtown landmarks. It is an outstanding example of the Richardsonian Romanesque style popular around the turn of the century. The design was loosely inspired by Henry H. Richardson's Trinity Church in Boston (1873-77), although it also incorporates distinct Byzantine features.

The original building is divided into three sections: the sanctuary, the social hall and classrooms, and the pastor's study to the east. The church was constructed in rusticated granite with yellow sandstone trim around the doors and windows. The sanctuary is illuminated by twenty-two beautiful stained glass windows, most notably the Ascension flanked by two Tiffany windows. The sanctuary is designed in the shape of a Greek cross. This motif is repeated throughout the interior. For one hundred years Epworth United Methodist Church has stood relatively intact with only minor changes to the interior.

Architectural Description

Epworth United Methodist Church is located on the northeast corner of Freemason and Boush streets in downtown Norfolk, Virginia. The main entrance is located on the south facade which

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetEpworth United Methodist Church
City of Norfolk, VirginiaSection number 7 Page 2

faces Freemason Street. The plan of the sanctuary is a Greek cross. To the east lie the social hall and Sunday school rooms and the pastor's study.

The church is constructed of granite and sandstone from quarries in Mt. Airy, North Carolina. The church shares the primary characteristics of other buildings in the Richardsonian Romanesque style: rusticated stonework, and elaborate use of color and pattern. The granite facades are accentuated with yellow sandstone, which is used to create the heavy voussoirs of the arches over the doorways. The arches spring from a foliate frieze of a medieval design cleverly combined with a classical egg-and-dart moulding. The triple-arched windows on the west wall, as well as the windows on the lower level, are separated by Romanesque colonettes. A sandstone belt course indicates the interior division of the gallery level. In the west gable, facing Boush Street, there is a blind bull's-eye window. Blind triple arches are located in the south gable facing Freemason Street.

The gabled roof and pyramidal top of the bell tower are covered with red tile. The bell tower is situated on the southwest corner of the building. The tower is broken horizontally into stages with sandstone bands. The upper levels of the tower are pierced by Romanesque arches. Two Gothic-style

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetEpworth United Methodist Church
City of Norfolk, VirginiaSection number 7 Page 3

gargoyles at the tops of each corner look out over the city. Turrets on the other corners of the building were used to create a visual balance and to indicate the division of the interior space.

The church is embellished with twenty-two stained glass windows. The most prominent are the three arched windows located on the west wall. The largest is the center window which depicts the Ascension, and is flanked by two Tiffany windows depicting scenes from the life of Christ.¹ Located on the north and south facades are identical rose windows.

Surrounding the center of the windows, which have Greek cross designs, are twelve circular windows encased in plate tracery appropriate for the Romanesque style. Most of the stained glass windows in the sanctuary were donated by members of the church, and were made by a Philadelphia firm.²

In 1896 Epworth was reported as having the finest pipe organ in the South. The pipes and three-manual console and choir loft were at the same level as three other galleries surrounding the sanctuary. The organ is described as being a "tracker action" organ, meaning "there were mechanical connections between the keys and the pipes."³ Built by the Hook and Hastings Company, the organ was purchased for ten thousand dollars.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetEpworth United Methodist Church
City of Norfolk, VirginiaSection number 7 Page 4

In 1921 the church was remodeled to its present appearance. The remodeling entailed the lowering of the choir loft and organ chambers and the rebuilding of the organ. A new four-manual console with electrical contact between the keys and pipes was installed by the Hall Organ Company.⁴ Two divisions were added in the rear balconies, a solo division in the northwest corner and an echo division in the southwest corner under the tower. These divisions sustained water and atmospheric damage because they were in contact with outer walls, and later had to be removed. The main organ's tune remained constant as it was sufficiently protected from these influences.⁵

In 1959 the organ was replaced with one built by the Aeolian-Skinner Organ Company of Boston, Massachusetts. The organ was designed to meet the demands of concert organists. The organ contains a full range of stops, and is capable of handling all types of organ music. It has three thousand pipes ranging in size from over sixteen feet high to the size of a pencil, and is divided into four divisions: three manual and one pedal.⁶

Four arches, spanning fifty feet across, spring from the corners of the gallery. The arches rest on piers with capitals carved in a medieval foliate pattern similar to the carving on the exterior. They support pendentives which in turn support a

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetEpworth United Methodist Church
City of Norfolk, VirginiaSection number 7 Page 5

Byzantine saucer dome reminiscent of the one in the Cathedral Church of St. John the Divine as originally designed by Heins and LaFarge (1892-1911). The center of the dome has an oculus covered with lights and stained glass. Originally the walls were covered with frescoes. As can be noted from a photograph of the sanctuary taken in 1896, the frescoes were of a highly decorative design, with Byzantine and other early medieval motifs.

Apparently the only figures in the composition were four angels located on the pendentives. These are all that remains of the frescoes. The angels were painted by New York artist Edward J. N. Stent and they represent the cardinal virtues of faith, hope, love, and charity.⁷ The arches were originally lined with lights very similar to those that still remain around the oculus.

The sanctuary is finished in antique oak with Greek crosses carved on the ends of the pews and the altar. The pews are arranged in a semicircle facing the pulpit which stands in front of the choir loft and organ on the east wall. In 1963 an interior redecoration took place using Hunter green carpet and light green paint to give the appearance it has today.⁸

The church has multiple entrances into its sanctuary. Those most frequently used today are the two entry ways located on the west facade. These doorways are located at street level below the stained glass windows. There are also two entrances on the

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetEpworth United Methodist Church
City of Norfolk, VirginiaSection number 7 Page 6

south facade. One entrance is on street level on the southwest corner of the church. Also on the south facade is a beautifully decorated vestibule that provides access to the sanctuary on the left, the classrooms in the center, and the pastor's offices on the right. The floor of the vestibule is paved in small mosaic tiles. Today the entrance is guarded by a wrought-iron gate. The arched windows are also covered by wrought iron of recent design.

The section that originally held the classrooms and social hall has been changed. Many of the original classrooms on the first level have been made into a small chapel and council rooms. The kitchen and social hall are at basement level. Storage rooms and furnace rooms are also in the basement. A small library is located on the first floor in an area left in its original state. The library houses books, both old and new. There are glass display cases which hold original documents, bibles, and other memorabilia from the early days of the church. There are various other artifacts such as samples of original woodwork that were replaced in reconstruction.

The upper level is still very much the same as it was originally; it contains a nursery and the choir dressing and practice rooms. The original woodwork and doors are still in place and they appear to be in good condition. In the 1950s a

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Epworth United Methodist Church
City of Norfolk, Virginia

Section number 7 Page 7

large addition was added to the north side to accommodate classrooms for today's use.

The pastor's office and a visiting room, located directly below the pastor's office, remains in its original condition. The secretary's office has been redecorated with carpet and formica paneling. A large office connects the old classrooms to the pastor's area. This room has the original woodwork but the floor is covered with linoleum. The winding staircase leading from the entry way in the vestibule to the pastor's offices is original.

Since the church is located downtown on a busy street, the landscaping is minimal. In front of the south facade is a small garden that is filled with shrubbery, flowers, and a small stone cross. A small sign is located in the garden providing the pastor's name, times of service, and a thought for the week. Parking is located across Boush Street in city parking lots and in parking lots for the surrounding office buildings. There is also a small lot directly behind the church's classroom building. Even in its restricted site, Epworth is a grand and handsome building.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Epworth United Methodist Church
City of Norfolk, Virginia

Section number 8 Page 8

Statement of Significance

Epworth United Methodist Church is a prominent landmark in downtown Norfolk, Virginia. It was designed and built by two important Virginia architects, John Edwin Ruthven Carpenter (1867-1932) and John Kevan Peebles (1876-1934). The church is a noteworthy example of the Richardsonian Romanesque style. According to the third edition of the Virginia Landmarks Register there are no other Richardsonian Romanesque styled buildings in the entire Hampton Roads area. In their use of color and texture, Carpenter and Peebles closely followed H. H. Richardson's sensibilities.

Epworth United Methodist Church played a significant part in the development and history of downtown Norfolk. The congregation has a history of support and service to the Norfolk community. The church is involved in the recent revitalization of the Norfolk downtown area.

Historical Significance

The origins of Epworth United Methodist Church can be traced to 1850 when a group of Methodists broke away from Cumberland Street Church to establish the Granby Street Methodist Church⁹. The Granby Street Church was established on the second floor of a building located on the corner of Granby and Freemason streets. In 1890 a committee was created to discuss the possibility of

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Epworth United Methodist Church
City of Norfolk, Virginia

Section number 8 Page 9

building a new church in order to be closer to the residential area, to create more space, and to be more accessible to the elderly members¹⁰.

The cornerstone for Epworth Methodist Episcopal Church (now called Epworth United Methodist Church) was laid on April 4, 1894 with an impressive Masonic ceremony conducted by Atlantic Lodge No. 2 of Norfolk.¹¹ On this evening a conference was called to choose a name for the church. Epworth was finally selected in remembrance of John Wesley's boyhood home in England. The church was dedicated on January 19, 1896.¹²

The architects of the church were John E. R. Carpenter and John K. Peebles. Carpenter was a graduate of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology with a degree in architecture, and he worked with Stanford White in the Boston offices of McKim, Mead, and White. Peebles was graduated from the University of Virginia with a degree in engineering. Carpenter and Peebles established an office in Norfolk in 1890, though based in Norfolk they were known statewide. Together they designed Fayerweather Hall at the University of Virginia in 1893, the same year they designed the Portsmouth Market and Armory.¹³

In 1895, Carpenter left Norfolk and went to Paris, France, to study at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts. He briefly returned to

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Epworth United Methodist Church
City of Norfolk, Virginia

Section number 8 Page 10

Norfolk and built the Monticello Hotel in 1898 (now demolished). He then moved to New York to practice. Carpenter was known for his apartment house designs, and in 1916 he was awarded the Gold Medal of the American Institute of Architects. He received another gold medal from the New York Chapter of the American Institute of Architects in 1926.¹⁴ Peebles continued to work in the area with Finley F. Ferguson, Sr. In 1902 and 1903 he served on the committee in charge of the addition of wings to Jefferson's State Capitol in Richmond, Virginia, and in 1907 he served as chairman of the Architectural Board of the Jamestown Exposition.¹⁵

Epworth United Methodist Church has a long, devoted history of support and service to the Norfolk community. Its committees have greatly contributed to local causes such as the establishment of the local branch of Goodwill Industries. The women of the church established the first local chapter of the King's Daughters, which was responsible for bringing the Children's Hospital of the King's Daughters to Norfolk.¹⁶ The congregation also contributed to the establishment of Virginia Wesleyan College.¹⁷

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Epworth United Methodist Church
City of Norfolk, Virginia

Section number 8 Page 11

Endnotes

1. The Epworth Story- A History of Leadership (Norfolk: Epworth United Methodist Church). This is a leaflet obtained from the church office.
2. The Ledger Star (Norfolk) 24 September 1963.
3. Unknown, "Brief history of the organs at Epworth", The New Aeolian-Skinner Organ (Norfolk, Va), December 1959. This is a leaflet from the church files.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
6. Unknown, "Concerning the new organ..." The New Aeolian-Skinner Organ (Norfolk, VA) December, 1959.
7. Hunt, A Century of Service 1850-1950, 18.
8. The Ledger Star (Norfolk) 24 September 1963.
9. The Reverend N. F. Hunt, A Century of Service (Norfolk, VA: Epworth United Methodist Church, 1950) 15.
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid, 16.
12. Ibid, 19.
13. Betsy L. Fahlman, Beth N. Rossheim, David W. Steadman, Peter Stewart, A Tricentennial Celebration: Norfolk 1682-1982, (Norfolk, VA: Chrysler Museum, 1982) 206.
14. Henry R. Withey, A.A., Elise Rathburn Withey, Biographical Dictionary of American Architects (deceased) (LA: Hennessey and Ingalla, Inc. 1970) .
15. Fahlman, A Tricentennial Celebration: Norfolk 1682-1982, 206.
16. Interview with Mr. Alton Carswell, August 13, 1992.
17. Ibid.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Epworth United Methodist Church
City of Norfolk, Virginia

Section number 8 Page 12

Bibliography

- Brownell, Charles E. Calder Loth, William M. S. Rasmussen, Richard Guy Wilson. The Making of Virginia Architecture. Richmond: Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, 1992.
- Fahlman, Betsy L. Rossheim, Beth N.; Steadman, David W.; Stewart, Peter, A Tricentennial Celebration: Norfolk 1682-1982. Norfolk: Chrysler Museum, 1982.
- Goldberger, Paul. The City Observed: New York, A Guide to the Architecture of Manhattan. New York: Vintage Books, 1979.
- Loth, Calder, ed. The Virginia Landmarks Register. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1986.
- Roth, Leland M. Concise History of American Architecture. New York: Happer and Row, 1979.
- Willensky, Elliot, Norval White. AIA Guide to New York City. New York: Harcourt Brace Jonvanovich, 1988.
- Withey, Henry F., Elisie Rathburn Withey. Biographical Dictionary of American Architects (deceased). Louisiana: Hennessey and Ingalls, Inc., 1970.
- Historic and Cultural Resources Inventory. Norfolk: Department of City Planning, 1981.

Archives

Epworth United Methodist Church

Sargeant Memorial Room Newspaper Archives (The Virginian Pilot and The Ledger Star), Kirn Library, Norfolk, VA.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

**Epworth United Methodist Church
Norfolk, Virginia**

Section 10 Page 13

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary of Epworth United Methodist Church is shown as the dotted line on the accompanying map entitled "Physical Survey for Epworth Methodist Church, Norfolk, Va, March 22, 1954."

Boundary Justification

*The boundary includes all property historically associated with Epworth Methodist Church.

NORFOLK SOUTH QUADRANGLE
VIRGINIA
7.5 MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC)

5797' 1 NW
LITTLE CREEK

17°30' 385 6 MI. TO U.S. 60 266 | 2 650 000 FEET 267 | HAMPTON (U.S. 258) 17 MI. 2.3 MI. TO INTERSTATE 64 76° 15' 36° 52' 30"



200 000
FEET

EPWORTH UNITED
METHODIST CHURCH
CITY OF NORFOLK, VA
UTM REFERENCE
18/384080/4079000

2.4 MI. TO U.S. 17
VIRGINIA BEACH (U.S. 60) 16 MI.