

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

VLR 3/20/8
NRHP 5/29/8

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

historic name Graves Chapel and Cemetery
other names/site number Graves Church; VDHR File No. 303-0015

2. Location

street & number 457 Chapel Road (SR 689) not for publication N/A
city or town Stanley vicinity N/A
state Virginia code VA county Page code 139 zip code 22851

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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.)

Walter Hesser April 15, 2008
Signature of certifying official Date
Virginia Department of Historic Resources
State or Federal Agency or Tribal government

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

Signature of commenting official/Title 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 the Keeper _____
Date of Action _____

5. Classification

Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)

Category of Property (Check only one box)

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

- X building(s)
district
site
structure
object

Number of Resources within Property

Table with 2 columns: Contributing, Noncontributing. Rows include buildings, sites, structures, objects, and Total.

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

Name of related multiple property listing (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.) N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: RELIGION Sub: religious facility (church)
FUNERARY cemetery
DOMESTIC single dwelling
DOMESTIC secondary structure

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: RELIGION Sub: religious facility (church)
FUNERARY cemetery
DOMESTIC single dwelling
DOMESTIC secondary structure

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

GOTHIC REVIVAL
LATE VICTORIAN

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation STONE
roof METAL
walls WOOD
other

Narrative Description (Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

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.
[X] 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.)

- [X] 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 1856 - circa 1893

Significant Dates 1856, 1860, circa 1870s, circa 1893

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above) N/A

Cultural Affiliation N/A

Architect/Builder unknown

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 # _____

Graves Chapel and Cemetery

Page County, Virginia

Primary Location of Additional Data

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

Name of repository: Virginia Department of Historic Resources

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10. Geographical Data
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Acreage of Property 4.694 acres

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

Zone	Easting	Northing									
1	17	718835	4	27	2580	2			3		

___ 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 J. Daniel Pezzoni w/ contributions by Michael Salvino, Charles Ballard, Darryl Nash & Robert Smith

organization Landmark Preservation Associates date December 31, 2007

street & number 6 Houston Street telephone (540) 464-5315

city or town Lexington state VA zip code 24450

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Additional Documentation
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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 Trustees of Graves Chapel (contact: Michael Salvino, Secretary)

street & number 272 Balkamore Hill Road telephone (540) 778-4830 mjsalvino@comcast.net

city or town Stanley state VA zip code 22851

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Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.). A federal agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB control number.

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 36 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the National Register of Historic Places, National Park Service, 1849 C St., NW, Washington, DC 20240.

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Graves Chapel and Cemetery
Page County, Virginia

Description (continued)

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

Summary

Graves Chapel and associated resources are located in the Town of Stanley in central Page County, Virginia. The church is situated in the nineteenth-century community of Marksville, which pre-existed Stanley and which adjoins the younger community. The south-facing church and its adjacent cemetery, parsonage, and privy lie on the north side of Chapel Road (State Route 689), historically a section of the Blue Ridge Turnpike, at an elevation of about 1,050 feet above sea level. Hawksbill Creek, a tributary of the Shenandoah and Potomac Rivers, flows nearby, and the Blue Ridge Mountains lie several miles to the east. Graves Chapel is a one-story frame building built in 1856 and enlarged in or about the 1870s. The center entry and flanking windows on the front gable end have Gothic Revival lancet arches; otherwise the building is distinguished by its vernacular simplicity. Other exterior features include weatherboard siding, metal roof sheathing, an open belfry, and a small apse. The interior is also simple in character, with painted wood floor boards, plaster and lath wall and ceiling finishes, and a turned altar rail. A cemetery extends to the east and north of the chapel and contains burials from 1860 to the present. The majority of monuments are carved from marble and granite; the older tombstones with decorative motifs. Adjoining the chapel on the west side at 451 Chapel Road is the parsonage, a two-story frame residence built about 1893, and an associated privy. The nominated area encompasses 4.694 acres and is surrounded by small parcels on which stand historic and modern dwellings and other buildings associated with the lightly developed outlying parts of Marksville and Stanley. Note: The description of the church is based in part on an analysis by architectural historian Darryl W. Nash (the 1998 report "Description of Graves Chapel, Page County, Virginia").

Inventory

1. Graves Chapel. 1856; circa 1870s. Contributing building.
2. Cemetery. 1860 and later. Contributing site.
3. Parsonage. circa 1893. Contributing building.
4. Privy. First half 20th century. Noncontributing building.

Detailed Description: Chapel Exterior

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Graves Chapel and Cemetery
Page County, Virginia

Description (continued)

As noted in the summary, Graves Chapel is a gable-fronted frame building of relatively simple character. Architectural elaboration is concentrated on the front elevation. The lancet windows have four-over-four sashes and the front entry has a four-panel door and transom divided into two panes. In the gable above is a round-arch panel with the painted inscription "Graves Chapel Church M. E. 1856." These features, and the front cornice returns, have simple trim. The open belfry, which sits on the ridge above the front gable, stands on four square posts with small sawn brackets at their top. It has a weatherboarded base and a pyramidal roof with a finial spike. The bell, which is mounted on a frame, was rung by two ropes: one which passed over a wheel and allowed the bell to be swung on an axis, and another that operated a striker mounted on the side for more precise ringing. Rising from above the eaves on each side elevation is a single flue (two flues in all) of light-colored brick construction with a corbelled cap of red brick. The four-over-four windows on the side elevations, which are hung with louvered shutters, are irregular in placement (see architectural discussion for a possible explanation). On the rear gable end are a shed-roofed apse of rectangular form, with small four-over-four windows on each side, and a small batten hatch in the gable above. The building has a fieldstone foundation, although investigation by Darryl Nash suggests it may originally have stood on piers. Nash also suggests that the building's present window sashes date to or about the 1870s, and that the present front door may have been reused from the original 1856 entry.

Detailed Description: Chapel Interior

The sanctuary has a rectangular plan with a center aisle between two sets of benches. The doors and windows have simple trim, as does the large rectangular opening between the sanctuary and apse. Across the west or altar end of the space is a single-step dais with a low altar rail with turned balusters and turned newel-like posts at the ends of each section of railing and under their midpoints. The pulpit, which has two beaded panels on the front and a coved bed molding, may be original to the building. It stands in front of the raised floor of the apse, on the back wall of which is a simple wood cross. There is a seam in the floor boards between the original section and circa 1870s addition with evidence for a former front entry in line with the present entry (see architectural discussion for alternative explanation). Darryl Nash suggests the possibility that the walls were formerly wallpapered, although no physical evidence now survives. The pews, which have shaped armrests, presumably date to or about the 1870s, since there are enough of them to fill the enlarged sanctuary.

The interior is heated by two pot-bellied stoves that exhaust into flues that rise up the walls. The stoves are ornamented with scrolling cast iron decoration and have urn finials. They are inscribed with "Gem Leader Oak" on their doors. A flue hole visible in the attic and charring of

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Graves Chapel and Cemetery
Page County, Virginia

Description (continued)

adjacent wood indicates that a stove once stood in the center aisle. The fact that the plaster and sawn lath cover the flue hole suggest that all or a portion of the ceiling finish was redone, perhaps during the circa 1870s work. Suspended from the ceiling is an ornate six-lamp chandelier that has been electrified. Each lamp has a pot-like reservoir, a glass chimney, and a milk glass shade. Electric sconces of similar character, added at some point after 1952, project from the walls. In the corner to the left of the pulpit stands an ornate Burdett organ and a paneled cabinet. A piano stands in the other corner.

The building's structure, where it is visible in the crawlspace and attic, has major members such as plates and sills that are mortised and pegged together. Most structural members are circular-sawn pine or fir. An exception is a summer beam in the attic, which is hewn. The rafters taper toward the ridge and sit on top of a false plate. The rafters of the original roof are lapped and pegged at the ridge and those in the circa 1870s roof are lapped and nailed at the ridge. Collar beams, which exist only in the original roof, are mortised and nailed to the rafters. Narrow nailers (one by two inches) were attached to the rafters to support what was originally a wood shingle roof. Similar nailers were used to extend the roof over the circa 1870s addition, and a few early wood shingles survive in the vicinity of the belfry. In subsequent reroofings the nailers were replaced with randomly spaced wide roof boards over the original section of the church, although they survive over the addition. The replacement roof boards appear to be construction scraps or reused floor or siding boards from another building.

Detailed Description: Cemetery

The cemetery extends to the east and north of the chapel. It has a standard orthogonal plan with numbered rectangular grave plots. The cemetery has three sections. To the east side of the chapel is the Graves Family section, which contains the cemetery's first interment, made in 1860. Wrapping behind the cemetery is a second early section. The largest and easternmost section may be located on land that was acquired by the church trustees in 1889. The cemetery contains mostly marble and granite tombstones dating from circa 1860 to the present. The majority of tombstones date to the historic period, before 1959 (see architectural discussion for a detailed discussion of the monuments). The cemetery was enclosed by a fence in the early twentieth century and was apparently fenced at the time of the Civil War. At least two cemetery refurbishings are known to have occurred in the 1930s that included sowing of grass seed and possibly also the planting of shrubs and irises. A walkway, possibly paved with bricks, extended from the front entry of the chapel to the road at the location of the present brick walkway. An information sign stands to the right of the entry and walkway. A Civil War Trails Marker, erected in 2000, also stands on the property.

Detailed Description: Parsonage and Privy

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Graves Chapel and Cemetery
Page County, Virginia

Description (continued)

The parsonage is a two-story frame house of plain appearance but with Victorian features typical of its period of construction, circa 1893. The gable-fronted house has metal roofing, vinyl siding, cornice returns, and one-over-one windows that appear to have replacement sashes. The front and back entries have mid-twentieth-century doors with small window panes. A brick flue rises from the interior and projects above the roof near the ridge line (the projecting section appears to have been rebuilt). Sheltering the entry and window of the two-bay front is a one-story porch with a hip roof and square wood posts, apparently mid- or late-twentieth-century replacements, on a concrete floor slab. A brick walkway leads up to the porch. An angled one-story bay window projects on the west side elevation. On the rear elevation is a one-story shed-roofed porch with modern replacement wood posts and balusters, and a one-story shed wing that may be a bathroom addition or a converted pantry. The front entry opens into a short hallway that contains a stair with slender square newels, square or rectangular balusters, and molded handrails. Floors are wood and walls and ceilings have either modern plaster finishes or paneling. The doors are mostly all four-panel, and both the doors and windows have plain surrounds. The privy is a small one-story frame building with a shed roof and a door. There is evidence that the building, which is now used as a tool shed, was moved to its present spot in the mid-twentieth century. Before that time it presumably stood elsewhere on the lot where it served as the privy for the chapel.

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Graves Chapel and Cemetery
Page County, Virginia

NARRATIVE STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Summary Statement of Significance

Graves Chapel, located in Page County, Virginia, is representative of the simple houses of worship built in the area during the middle decades of the nineteenth century. The chapel was built in 1856 to serve a Methodist congregation formed by community leader Paschal Graves and others. The original nave-form chapel, which is vernacular in character, was extended in or around the 1870s by a Gothic Revival front addition. Associated with the chapel is a cemetery established in 1860 that features many decoratively carved tombstones from the historic period, and a circa 1893 parsonage of simple Victorian character. The chapel and cemetery are located in the historic community of Marksville, now a part of the Town of Stanley. Graves Chapel remains in use for special occasions.

Graves Chapel and Cemetery are eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C in the architecture area of significance as a representative rural church and cemetery from the nineteenth century in Page County, Virginia. The period of significance begins with the completion of the chapel in 1856 and extends to circa 1893, encompassing a renovation of the chapel in or around the 1870s, the early development of the cemetery, and the construction of the parsonage circa 1893. The Graves Chapel and Cemetery property is eligible at the local level of significance.

Acknowledgements

A number of organizations and individuals assisted the preparation and review of this nomination, foremost among them the nomination's sponsor, the Trustees of Graves Chapel and its Secretary, Michael Salvino, who conducted research on the property and took the nomination photographs. The principal sources used for the nomination were a historical discussion of the chapel by historian Charles C. Ballard, an architectural analysis by architectural historian Darryl W. Nash, and a documentation of the cemetery by historian Robert L. Smith. Assistance was also provided by David Edwards, Joanie Evans, Jean McRae, Kelly Spradley-Kurowski, and Marc Wagner of the Virginia Department of Historic Resources.

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Graves Chapel and Cemetery
Page County, Virginia

Statement of Significance (continued)

Historical Background

The story of Graves Chapel begins with the man for whom the church is named: Paschal Graves (1796-1860). Graves, a native of Madison County, “found the rolling, well-watered lands at the western base of the high Blue Ridge agriculturally attractive and economically well situated for trade,” according to historian Charles C. Ballard. By 1820 he was living in the Marksville area of central Page County, and by 1850, according to the federal census of that year, he had acquired a thousand acres and owned eight slaves. Historian Harry Strickler credited Graves with being the main force behind the construction of the Blue Ridge Turnpike, which was incorporated during the 1847-48 session of the General Assembly to link Page County with the counties of Madison, Greene, and Albemarle. Marksville, the community where the Chapel would be built, gained a post office by the mid-1830s and was described in an 1855 gazetteer as a “post-village of Page County.” By the end of the antebellum period Marksville had developed into a thriving community with several hundred residents, two water-powered gristmills, a store, and a blacksmith shop.¹

According to Charles Ballard, by the 1850s Paschal Graves and others in Marksville had become adherents of Methodism. Graves’s “concern for the spiritual welfare of himself, his family and neighbors prompted him to set aside an acre of his land on a prominent summit in Marksville . . . for the erection of a meetinghouse.” Graves Chapel Methodist Episcopal (or M. E.) Church was built on the Blue Ridge Turnpike in 1856 and named for Paschal Graves. The chapel was affiliated with the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, which was not anti-slavery. On August 25, 1860, Graves and his wife Elizabeth Cowherd Graves (1805-70) deeded to a group of trustees an acre lot on which stood “a meeting house known as Graves Church.” The grantees or trustees were Jacob Mohler, Wesley Bear, William Pettitt, James M. Graves, and John William Graves. The deed also noted that “a burial place is to be laid off” on the lot and required that the lot be fenced. Paschal Graves died three days later on August 28, 1860, and was buried in the newly established cemetery. Graves’ will stipulated that the chapel be used for “a place of religious worship” with the proviso that should a year pass without a religious service being held in the building, the property would revert to the Graves’s family. The 1860 deed also contained a reversion clause.²

The location of Graves Chapel on the Blue Ridge Turnpike, an important regional crossing of the mountain range separating the Piedmont and the Shenandoah Valley, made it a location of interest during the Civil War. Confederate General Thomas J. “Stonewall” Jackson led his army past the chapel in November 1862 on his way from the Valley to rejoin the Army of Northern Virginia near Fredericksburg. In 2000 a Civil War Trails Marker was erected at Graves Chapel to commemorate “Jackson’s Last Glimpse of the Shenandoah Valley;” in May 1863 Jackson died after he was accidentally shot by his own men in battle. Accounts of the death and burial of two Confederate soldiers at the chapel in 1864 provide insights into the use of the building during its first decade of

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Graves Chapel and Cemetery
Page County, Virginia

Statement of Significance (continued)

existence. In 1931 J. H. Coffman, who was familiar with the building as a boy in the 1860s, recalled “Graves Chapel was used as a hospital. The church at that time had a gallery. This was used for the storage of wheat to feed the horses, as corn was very scarce at that time.” According to Coffman, one of the soldiers died on a makeshift bed formed by “two of the short benches used in the so-called amen corner.” Coffman’s account of a gallery is hard to reconcile with the present form of the church, which has a ceiling that is too low to have accommodated a gallery or mezzanine level. However, his recollection that the chapel was used as a temporary military hospital is highly probable considering the amount of military activity in the area, the frequent use of churches as hospitals during the war, and the fact that the two soldiers were buried at the location.³

The two Confederate soldiers buried in the cemetery were William F. Bruner and a Sergeant Whistleberry, both attached to a South Carolina cavalry company. They died in March 1864 in or near the chapel (accounts differ somewhat as to the circumstances of their deaths). Whistleberry was said to have been buried “in the extreme Southeast corner of the cemetery, under the shade of a large red oak tree that was the corner of the burial lot.” (The 1860 deed described a red oak that served as a front corner boundary marker for the chapel and cemetery lot.) Samuel M. Larkins made the coffins for the deceased men. One of the coffins was described as being constructed of poplar stained red and with corners beveled or chamfered with a jack knife. Peaked marble monuments were erected for the soldiers in the twentieth century.⁴

Graves Chapel served the village of Marksville and surrounding countryside through the end of the nineteenth century and into the early years of the twentieth century. By the mid-1880s Marksville and its vicinity were home to a range of business and professional men and activities including distillers, general merchants, a hotel (the Biedler House), a tannery, mills, physicians, tradesmen such as a cabinetmaker, a millwright, a saddler and harnessmaker, and—most relevant to the chapel’s cemetery—an undertaker, John A. Hutchinson, a successor to the Samuel M. Larkins of the Civil War era. A schoolhouse stood on an adjacent lot to the east and was still in use in 1905. A lot on the west side of the chapel was obtained for a parsonage in 1887 and land for an expansion of the cemetery was purchased from Samuel M. Biedler and Margaret A. Biedler in 1889. The parsonage and cemetery expansion and the enlargement of the chapel believed to have taken place in the 1870s are evidence of a growing congregation during the era. Records from the 1890 to 1901 period counted over 240 members “in full connection.” In March 1893 the trustees established a procedure for liquidating debt incurred by the construction of a parsonage, suggesting the two-story parsonage that stands next to the chapel was recently completed or was in the process of being completed.⁵

In the early 1880s the Valley Railroad was constructed within a couple of miles to the west of Marksville and by the turn of the twentieth century the town of Stanley had begun to develop around a station on the line. In 1909 the Methodist Conference granted permission for the establishment of

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Graves Chapel and Cemetery
Page County, Virginia

Statement of Significance (continued)

a church in Stanley, and in 1918 the Stanley United Methodist Church was dedicated. Harry Strickler wrote that the membership of Graves Chapel transferred to the Stanley church and Graves Chapel closed about 1945 (seven years before Strickler published his county history). Charles Ballard describes a somewhat different scenario. Rather than closing completely, “Graves Chapel assumed an altered role as a venue for occasional religious services.” A postcard view of the chapel taken in the early twentieth century shortly before the change shows the front elevation in essentially its present form, with a decorative wire fence and gate in front. Trustees minutes, which are continuous for the period 1920 through 1963, indicate fairly extensive repair work on the chapel in 1949-50, when over \$1,500 was paid for labor and building materials. Minutes from the same period refer to the relocation of the “Johnny house,” presumably the privy that now stands behind the parsonage. A photograph taken inside the church during the wedding of Betsy Graves and Robert L. Smith in 1952 indicates that few changes have occurred to the interior since. Sympathetic repairs were made to Graves Chapel in the early 2000s by the owner of the property, the Trustees of Graves Chapel. Historic construction materials and architectural features were retained. A few weatherboards were replaced in kind and others with superficial damage were flipped over. Graves Chapel’s cemetery remains in use, and the chapel itself is used for occasional religious services and special events.⁶

Architectural Discussion

Graves Chapel is a well preserved example of the simple vernacular churches built in rural Page County during the nineteenth century. These buildings were typically rectangular in form with gable roofs and frame, log, or brick construction. Architectural historian Darryl Nash notes the similarity of churches and dwellings in the region’s early architecture. “Churches of several denominations were still [in 1856] built exactly like domestic architecture, mirroring the theological principal that a ‘house of worship’ should look like a ‘house’ and not something special.” Traditions of craftsmanship, such as chamfering and simple planed moldings, were more likely to inform the finishes of these buildings, as opposed to the expression of particular styles. Regarding the local use of the styles for church buildings, Greek Revival influence began to be felt in the late antebellum period, followed by Gothic Revival influence later in the century—as demonstrated by the Gothic Revival alterations to Graves Chapel believed to date to the 1870s, based on architectural analysis by Darryl Nash. At the end of the nineteenth century and the early part of the twentieth century, more complex church plans and more elaborate and sophisticated details were introduced to the county.⁷

The circa 1870s addition served the dual purposes of providing Graves Chapel with a more stylish Gothic Revival front (assuming the original front elevation was as simple as the sides) and extending it approximately fifteen feet to enlarge the interior. The fact that the congregation was willing to

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Graves Chapel and Cemetery
Page County, Virginia

Statement of Significance (continued)

depart from the austerity of the original building suggests a corresponding change in religious outlook. The addition accounts for some of the asymmetry of the side windows. A square-headed window was added on each side elevation of the addition to continue the line of original windows, but the proportions of the addition and original building made for uneven spacing. The irregular spacing between the original windows is harder to explain. There is enough space between the two westernmost windows for another opening, particularly an entry (rather than a window, which would have presumably had shutters, making it wider). There is precedent for entries on the non-gable elevations of antebellum Page County churches in the “meetinghouse plan” seen in such buildings as the circa 1800 Mauck’s Meeting House (VDHR File No. 069-0006), which was placed on the Virginia Landmarks Register in 1975 and the National Register of Historic Places in 1976, and the 1846 Elk Run Meetinghouse (VDHR File No. 069-5175). Darryl Nash sees evidence for an original entry on the east gable end, which may be taken as evidence that the church originally had its present nave plan with the entry, then as now, facing the road. It is not inconceivable that the building had two entries—a gable-end entry and a side entry—or that what is interpreted as evidence for an original east gable-end entry actually relates to a former window at that location, which may have been balanced by a window on the west gable end later eliminated when the apse was added.⁸

Darryl Nash has studied the roof structure in detail and notes the complex structural modifications that were made when the roof and underlying building were extended. The original wall plate of the building’s front, “now weakened by numerous mortises and removal of supporting posts,” writes Nash, “was too weak to carry the load of a new summer beam and joist system without risking sagging and failure of the new ceiling. The builder devised an ingenious system of rafters, supports, and rods to take the strain off the [former plate] and distribute its new load toward the outside framing members.” One-inch diameter iron rods and additional framing members were added to achieve the solution. “The entire system has worked very well to hold in place a heavy ceiling of lath and plaster without support from below. It has prevented roof sag and wall expansion for nearly a century and a half.”⁹

Graves Chapel’s cemetery has a number of notable characteristics. Unlike county graveyards from earlier in the century, the chapel’s cemetery has few fieldstone markers or locally made vernacular tombstones. The earliest dated tombstones, such as that of Paschal Graves (d. 1860), were crafted from marble by professional monument carvers. None of these early stones are known to have been signed by their makers. The cemetery’s nineteenth-century tombstones are decorated with stock Victorian figures such as willow trees (the symbol used on Paschal Graves’s monument), ivy leaves, crowns, crosses, and hands with upward pointing fingers, or emblems signifying trades or affiliations, such as the Masonic square and dividers which appear on the gravestone of Trenton O. Graves (d. 1890). In some instances the iconography and epitaph were coordinated thematically. The headstone of Henry C. Keyser (1879-81) has a small recessed panel with a stem and flower carved in bas relief above an inscription that includes the verse “Brightest flowers first plucked.” The forms of

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Graves Chapel and Cemetery
Page County, Virginia

Statement of Significance (continued)

the marble monuments are typically conventional and relatively simple, including obelisks and tabular tombstones with shaped tops, but a few monuments are more elaborate. The tombstone of Eugene L. Stebbins (1876-84) combines a cruciform profile with a deeply recessed trefoil panel carved with a flower and an inscription panel with a complex layered border. Marble monuments were placed in the cemetery into the early twentieth century, but the majority of monuments since 1900 and all or virtually all since the mid-twentieth century are carved from more durable granite, specifically gray Georgia granite. As noted above, the 1860 deed stipulated that the cemetery be fenced and it specified the construction of the fence in detail. The lot was to have “a good and substantial fence made of locust posts hewed on two sides and every alternate post mortised and put up with good heart pine or yellow pine plank, one and a half inches thick and five [or] six inches wide.”¹⁰

Documentary evidence indicates use of Graves Chapel as a military hospital during the Civil War, at least briefly. Archaeology in the area surrounding the chapel would have the potential to confirm that use and provide additional information. Archaeology could potentially provide information on other aspects of the history and development of the chapel and cemetery.

Endnotes

1. Ballard, Graves Chapel history; Strickler, *Short History of Page County*, 28 (footnote); Williams, *Index to Enrolled Bills*, 85; Martin, *New and Comprehensive Gazetteer of Virginia*, 415; Edwards, *Statistical Gazetteer of the State of Virginia*, 303.
2. Ballard, Graves Chapel history; Smith, “Graves Chapel Cemetery,” 17, 49, 77. Examination of the church records has yet to reveal detailed information on the construction of the chapel and its enlargement in or about the 1870s.
3. Ballard, Graves Chapel history; “Graves Chapel;” Smith, “Graves Chapel Cemetery,” 72.
4. Smith, “Graves Chapel Cemetery,” 71-72, 77.
5. Chataigne, *Chataigne’s Virginia Gazetteer . . . 1884-’5*, 493-496; Lake, *Hammond’s Edition of the Atlas of Shenandoah and Page Counties*; Smith, “Graves Chapel Cemetery,” 71-72; Strickler, *Short History of Page County*, 267; Bauserman, “History of the Town of Stanley,” 74.
6. Michael Salvino personal communication; Bauserman, “History of the Town of Stanley,” 74; Smith, “Graves Chapel Cemetery,” 73-74. Michael Salvino has reviewed the Trustees minutes going back to 1920 in search of information relevant to the nomination.

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Graves Chapel and Cemetery
Page County, Virginia

Statement of Significance (continued)

7. Giles and Pezzoni, "Page County Historic Resources Survey Report," 18-19; Nash, "Description of Graves Chapel."

8. Giles and Pezzoni, "Page County Historic Resources Survey Report," 18-19; Nash, "Description of Graves Chapel."

9. Nash, "Description of Graves Chapel."

10. Smith, "Graves Chapel Cemetery," 5, 22, 25, 35, 36, 49, 53, 54, 56.

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Page County, Virginia

GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundaries of the nominated area are shown on the 1:100-scale site plan that accompanies the nomination. The site plan is adapted from a consolidation survey made in 2006 by Dodson Surveying, Inc., referencing Tax Map #71A6 (A) 53, 54, & 54A. The site plan is referenced in Deed Book 385, Page 345; Deed Book 214, Page 329; Deed Book 20, Page 161-162; and Deed Book 8, Page 169.

Boundary Justification

The boundaries of the nominated area encompass the chapel and historically associated resources including the cemetery and parsonage.

Graves Chapel and
Cemetery
Page Co., Va
UTM ref. (zone 17):
1E718035 N4272500

