

VLR-6/19/91 NRHP-8/23/91

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 of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 18). 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/sites number DHR File No. 128-236

2. Location

street & number Southwest corner Jefferson St. & Elm Ave N/A not for publication
city, town Roanoke N/A vicinity
state Virginia code VA county Roanoke (city) code 770 zip code 24007

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u>1</u>	<u> </u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	<u> </u>	<u> </u> sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<u>3</u> structure	<u> </u>	<u>1</u> structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u> </u>	<u> </u> objects
		<u>1</u>	<u>1</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing:
N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 1

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.

Wayne C. Miller
Signature of certifying official 7/4/91
Date
Director, 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.

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): _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

RELIGION: religious facility (church)

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

RELIGION: religious facility (church)

FUNERARY: cemetery (columbarium)

LANDSCAPE: garden

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

Gothic

Tudor Revival

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation STONE: limestone; BRICK

walls STONE: limestone, sandstone

BRICK; CONCRETE

roof STONE: slate

other

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

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

1891-1941

Significant Dates

1891-92

1919

1923

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

(see continuation sheet)

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

9. Major Bibliographical References

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 # _____

See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional data:

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

Specify repository:

St. John's Episcopal Church Archives

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property .75 acres

UTM References

A 17 5193850 4124770
Zone Easting Northing

C _____

B _____
Zone Easting Northing

D _____

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundaries of the nominated parcel are portrayed on the accompanying site plan. The parcel is comprised of City of Roanoke tax parcels #1021107 and #1021108.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundaries of the nominated parcel are drawn to include the principal contributing resource (the church) and the closely associated meditation garden and columbarium.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Mary Bland Armistead, Henry Davenport, Barry A. Rakes, Clare White, Daniel Pezzoni
 organization St. John's Episcopal Church History Committee date April 27, 1991
 street & number Jefferson and Elm (PO Box 257) telephone (703) 343-9341
 city or town Roanoke state Virginia zip code 24002

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7. DESCRIPTION

SUMMARY

St. John's Episcopal Church is located on the southwest corner of Jefferson Street and Elm Avenue in downtown Roanoke, Virginia at the eastern tip of the Southwest National Register Historic District. The Gothic-style building was designed by Philadelphia architect Charles M. Burns and was built in 1891-92. In form the church is a gable-roofed nave-plan edifice with side aisles, a corner bell tower, a sacristy wing, and a transverse chapel and narthex to the rear (see plan). The nave features a hammerbeam roof and wooden arcading and is illuminated by stained glass windows in the clerestory and side aisle walls including several by Louis C. Tiffany. Extending to the rear of the original church is a formerly detached 1923 brick Tudor-style Parish House joined to the church by a 1958 stone addition. To the south side of church is a meditation garden with a modern columbarium.

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EXTERIOR: NAVE, BELL TOWER, SACRISTY AND CHAPEL

St. John's is constructed of quarry-faced limestone ashlar laid in a random bond with sandstone coping, window sills, and other detailing. The blue-gray limestone was quarried at Peak Creek in Pulaski County, Virginia; the red sandstone was quarried in Prince William County, Virginia. The stonework at the corners of the nave, sacristy and bell tower projects slightly. The gable roofs of the nave, sacristy, narthex and chapel and the pyramidal roof of the bell tower are sheathed in dark gray, plain-edged slate shingles with copper flashing.

The principal feature of the nave exterior is the east-facing parapeted gable end interrupted only by a large lancet-arched stained glass window and a small loophole window. Red sandstone forms the weatherings of the buttresses at the corners of the gable end, the sill of the lancet-arched window and the small cross at the apex of the gable.

At the northeast corner of the building is the crenelated bell tower with angled corner buttresses similar to those of the nave. The bell tower is approximately fifty-four feet in height and is divided into three vertical sections by red sandstone stringcourses; red sandstone also forms the weatherings of the merlons and crenels and a dentiled belt course just below the crenels. The first level of the tower has an east-facing lancet-arched entryway with light-stained double wooden doors hung on elaborate wrought iron hinges (this entry is no longer in use, the entry foyer in the first level of the bell tower having been converted to an oratory). On the north side of the first level of the bell tower are four closely spaced lancet-arched windows. The second level has three loophole windows. The third level belfry has louvered and traceried lancet-arched openings on all four sides (the belfry was not provided with a bell until 1989). At the apex of the pyramidal belfry roof is a delicate metal Celtic cross.

The two-story sacristy wing extends from the south side of the nave opposite the bell tower. The sheer masonry walls of the sacristy are interrupted only by a few lancet-arched windows and a lancet-arched exterior entry. Running down both sides of the nave are shed-roofed side aisles with pairs of lancet-arched windows separated by buttresses. An entry was made in 1907 through the wall of the north side aisle near the base of the bell tower to alleviate crowding before and after services and to provide better ventilation for the nave. A clerestory comprised of coupled trefoil-arched windows fills the wall space between the roofs of the nave and side aisles.

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Forming the rear of the original section is a transverse chapel that has a gable roof that runs perpendicular to the main roof. In the north gable end of the chapel are three lancet-arched stained glass windows and a simple cross. A stone-faced boiler flue was added to the gable end at an early date. Between the chapel and the north side aisle of the nave is a small gabled porch (forming the north end of the narthex) with corner buttresses giving it a squat appearance and an entry with a lancet-arched transom and doors similar to those at the front of the church.

EXTERIOR: ADDITIONS

The rear (west) elevation of the church is the product of two twentieth-century building campaigns. The 1923 Parish House, designed by Philadelphia architect Edward T. Boggs and built by J. P. Pettyjohn of Lynchburg, is a three-story stretcher-bond brick building with Tudor-style detailing. The west elevation of the Parish House has buttresses with cast stone weatherings, cast stone belt courses, and large segmental-arched windows that formerly illuminated a gymnasium. A two-story gabled brick annex extends from the south elevation of the Parish House. In 1958 a three-story random limestone ashlar faced addition was made to the north-facing Elm Avenue front of the Parish House, obscuring and altering a bell tower and a gable end with a large lancet-arched window. The 1958 addition, designed by the Roanoke architectural firm of Smithey and Boynton, forms a transition between the original church and the Parish House by combining the rough blue-gray masonry of the original church with the belt courses (in this case of Indiana limestone) and multi-paned clear glass windows of the Parish House.

INTERIOR: STRUCTURE

The principal interior space in St. John's is the nave, which contains seating for the communicants and is flanked by side aisles. The sanctuary, located at the east end of the nave, is flanked on the north by an oratory (in the first level of the bell tower) and on the south by the sacristy. Demarcating the nave from the side aisles are two rows of chamfered, square-section wood columns. Spanning between the columns are curved wood members forming lancet arches with open spandrels. Large cylindrical lamps hang from these arches. Curved and straight wood members reminiscent of flying buttresses spring from a line of neck moldings outward over the side aisles where they meet other curved

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members and the rafters of the side aisle roofs to form a second series of lancet arches with open spandrels.

Resting on top of the columns are the clerestories and roof of the nave. Curved wood members spring from the tops of the columns to support hammer beams that extend from the juncture of the nave roof and clerestories. More curved wood members spring from the ends of the hammer beams and join at the roof ridge forming a series of lancet arches with open spandrels above the center aisle of the sanctuary. The ends of opposing hammer beams are connected by tie rods. In the ceiling above the trusses of the nave are exposed rafters, purlins and tongue-and-groove sheathing; the side aisle ceilings have exposed rafters and sheathing. All the woodwork in the nave and side aisles is stained a dark brown color that contrasts with the white plaster finish of the masonry walls.

INTERIOR: SANCTUARY

Demarcating the nave from the sanctuary is a large masonry lancet arch supported by short paired columns that in turn are supported by decorative corbeled blocks. Dominating the sanctuary is a large traceried stained glass window that forms with the altar the focal point of the interior of the church. Made by the J. and R. Lamb Studio of New Jersey and entitled "The Resurrection", the window depicts an angel and the three Marys at Christ's empty tomb. Below the window in the chancel is a white marble reredos with a central niche containing a gold cross and four flanking niches containing statues of the the four authors of the Gospel. Below the reredos is the white marble altar with three quatrefoil panels. Extending around the base of the sanctuary walls is a wainscot-like series of shallow lancet-arched niches; one of these niches to the south side of the altar is larger than the others and is used to hold the communion vessels and offertory plates; another niche on the south wall of the sanctuary is provided with kneelers for two altar boys. In front of the chancel, separated from it by an altar rail, is the choir. On the north and south walls of the sanctuary are square headed doorways leading to the oratory and sacristy respectively and above them organ pipes backed by grilled embrasures containing more pipes. At the northwest corner of the sanctuary facing into the nave is an elevated octagonal brass pulpit below a carved oak canopy. At the southwest corner of the chancel is the lectern. The tiled floor of the sanctuary is raised slightly above that of the nave.

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INTERIOR: NAVE

The nave is illuminated from all sides by stained glass windows. High on the rear west wall is a rose window with blue and yellow glass. The windows in the clerestory are glazed with small translucent white panes edged with red panes. The figurative memorial windows in the side aisles were made by the J. and R. Lamb Studio except for a pair of windows on the north side, one of which is signed "Louis C. Tiffany" and its companion which is attributable to Tiffany. A wainscot runs below the windows and across the west wall of the nave where it is interrupted by three doorways to the narthex. Also of note in the nave are the baptismal font in the east end of the south side aisle, the trompette en chamade below the rose window (serving, with the pipes in the sanctuary, an Aeolian-Skinner organ), the dark stained pews, and the floor of reddish-brown tiles. Under the nave is a foundation of limestone piers and brick arches. Stained glass windows and other architectural elements left over from various remodelings are stored in the basement.

INTERIOR: ALTERATIONS TO THE NAVE AND SANCTUARY

The nave and sanctuary of St. John's have changed little since 1898, the date of the earliest known photograph of the interior; however, a number of minor changes deserve comment. Many of these changes served to upgrade original treatments and are in the form of memorials to departed parishoners. The woodwork of the columns and roof structure was originally painted a light color (the neck moldings on the columns were painted a darker hue). The stained glass window in the sanctuary was not yet in place in 1898. The glazing in the clerestory windows was replaced during the early twentieth century. The Aeolian-Skinner organ was installed in 1949 and the trompette en chamade dates to 1968 (the earliest organ stood against the south wall of the choir). In 1903 electric lights replaced the oil lamps that were attached to the columns between the nave and side aisles. The original pine pews were replaced prior to 1909 by the present dark-stained oak pews. The original pine flooring lies below the present tiles. The marble reredos replaced what may have been a dark-stained wooden reredos in 1911. Unobtrusive heating and air conditioning was inserted in 1968.

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**INTERIOR: NARTHEX, CHAPEL OF SAINT LUKE THE PHYSICIAN,
PARISH HOUSE, AND 1958 ADDITION**

Separating the nave from the rear transverse chapel and additions is a long transverse hallway referred to as the narthex. Entryways surmounted by lancet-arched stained glass transoms provide access to the narthex at both its north and south ends. The narthex has a high paneled wainscot and a slate-pattern linoleum floor.

The Chapel of Saint Luke the Physician occupies the north end of the transverse chapel and represents the latest in a succession of changes to this section of the original church. Originally referred to as a chapel, this section of the church contained a single large room that was used as a Sunday School. Above the Sunday School room was a small meeting room. In 1907 a full second story was added to this section and the lower story was divided into fifteen classrooms for the Sunday School. The second story was used as a chapel and was reached by stair from the narthex. Thus remodelled this section of the church was referred to as the Parish House until the completion of the present Parish House in 1923.

Consecrated in 1978, the Chapel of St. Luke was designed by Roanoke architects William Mounfield and John Thompson. The chapel has oak veneer paneling to a height of approximately ten feet on the walls with plaster finishes above, a slatted wooden ceiling, a marble altar and baptismal font, and a triplet lancet-arched stained glass window. Designed by Margareta Overbeck and executed by the J. and R. Lamb Studio, the window features Christ in the center panel surrounded by an array of symbolic designs.

The present Parish House, completed in 1923, originally contained a basement gymnasium, a 500-seat auditorium, classrooms, choir rooms, a dining room and kitchen, a guild room (an auxiliary dining room), bedrooms for visiting clergy, and offices. The offices were occupied by the rector of St. John's and by the Bishop of the Diocese of Southwestern Virginia, his secretary, and the Secretary-Treasurer of the diocese. The two offices of the Bishop and secretaries were originally finished in mahogany. The interior of the Parish House was remodeled in 1954 and a third floor inserted in the auditorium but the stair wells and hallways retain some original fabric. The 1958 addition to the north front of the Parish House contains offices.

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MEDITATION GARDEN AND COLUMBARIUM

The meditation garden and columbarium on the south side of St. John's occupy a parcel that was originally the site of the George H. Vogel House, a two-story Queen Anne-style brick house built around the turn of the twentieth century. The Vogel House was acquired by the church in 1962 and replaced by a streetside handicapped parking lot. The back yard of the house, landscaped with several large deciduous trees, was further embellished in the late 1960s by parishoner Elizabeth Ewart James who laid out boxwoods, dogwoods, white pines and other trees and shrubs around the edges of the yard. The resulting meditation garden has a central lawn used for outdoor activities.

The streetside parking lot was replaced in 1987 by a brick columbarium designed by architect William Freeman of High Point, North Carolina. The columbarium consists of three brick walls with 436 niches where ashes are kept and a brick paved area with a metal Celtic cross. The strip of ground between the columbarium and the Jefferson Street sidewalk was planted with American hollies and a wrought iron fence was installed along the sidewalk in 1988. Evergreens have also been planted in raised stone beds between the north side of the church and the Elm Avenue sidewalk. To the west side of the church complex on a separate parcel not included in the nomination is a landscaped parking lot. Early-twentieth-century houses, low-rise apartment blocks, and later small-scale commercial buildings share the block between Elm and Mountain avenues and Jefferson and First streets with St. John's.

ARCHITECTURAL ANALYSIS

St. John's was designed by Charles Marquedant Burns (1838-1922) of Philadelphia. Educated at the University of Pennsylvania and the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Burns began practicing architecture in the mid-1860s, his earliest known commissions being for Episcopal churches in the Philadelphia area during the late 1860s and the 1870s.(1) By the last two decades of the nineteenth century Burns's work for the Episcopal church in Pennsylvania and adjoining states was so considerable that he is said to have achieved the de facto status of "principal architect for the Episcopal Church [in Pennsylvania] at the end of the nineteenth century."(2) Burns retired in 1907.(3)

The parish church tradition of medieval England provided Burns with his inspiration for St. John's. This tradition, revived by

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Anglican ecclesiologists during the 1830s, was embraced by a group of Episcopal ministers, parishioners and architects in several American cities during the 1840s. A seminal American product of the new thinking was the church of St. James the Less, built in suburban Philadelphia in 1846-47 as a replica of a thirteenth-century English church.(4) Charles M. Burns was familiar with St. James; in 1878, as one of his earliest recorded commissions, Burns designed a rood screen for the church. Burns designed other embellishments for St. James during the 1880s and 1890s, a period when he served as a vestryman of the church.(5) St. James and other early literal Gothic Revival churches in Philadelphia played a significant role in shaping Burns's architectural thought and contributed indirectly to the design of St. John's. St. John's displays the simplicity of form and material introduced by St. James and its contemporaries and also incorporates formal elements from the tradition such as the small entry porch and the differentiation of the nave and sanctuary.

Although Burns was the principal architect for St. John's, the resident architect, William Churchhill Noland (1865-1951), and the builder, Frederick J. Amweg (born in 1856), played important roles in the realization of the project. Noland, like Burns an Episcopalian, was born in Virginia but received his architectural training at the Philadelphia firm of Cope & Stewardson during the 1880s. St. John's was among Noland's earliest known commissions; later in his career he designed several Episcopal churches in Richmond and in association with others designed alterations and additions to the Virginia State Capitol Building in 1902-06.(6) Frederick J. Amweg of Pennsylvania, the contractor for St. John's, established offices in Roanoke in late 1890 to undertake the construction of the seven-story Terry Building at the corner of Jefferson and Campbell. In addition to the Terry Building, St. John's, the Roanoke Academy of Music Building and presumably other buildings in Roanoke, Amweg built railroad bridges throughout Western Virginia.(7)

St. John's represents the largest and finest example of nineteenth-century ecclesiological design in Southwest Virginia. It and several other smaller Episcopal churches in the region (among them Christ Episcopal Church in Blacksburg, designed in 1875 by Emlen T. Littell) constitute the vanguard of historically informed church architecture in the region. In a broader sense, the sophistication of St. John's is the material manifestation of the cosmopolitan, influential and wealthy congregation that commissioned the church. This congregation, made up of the scions of the Roanoke Valley's planter elite and business and professional

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men (and their wives) from outside the area, was in turn the particular product of the urbanization of Roanoke, the dominant city of the region from the late nineteenth century to the present.

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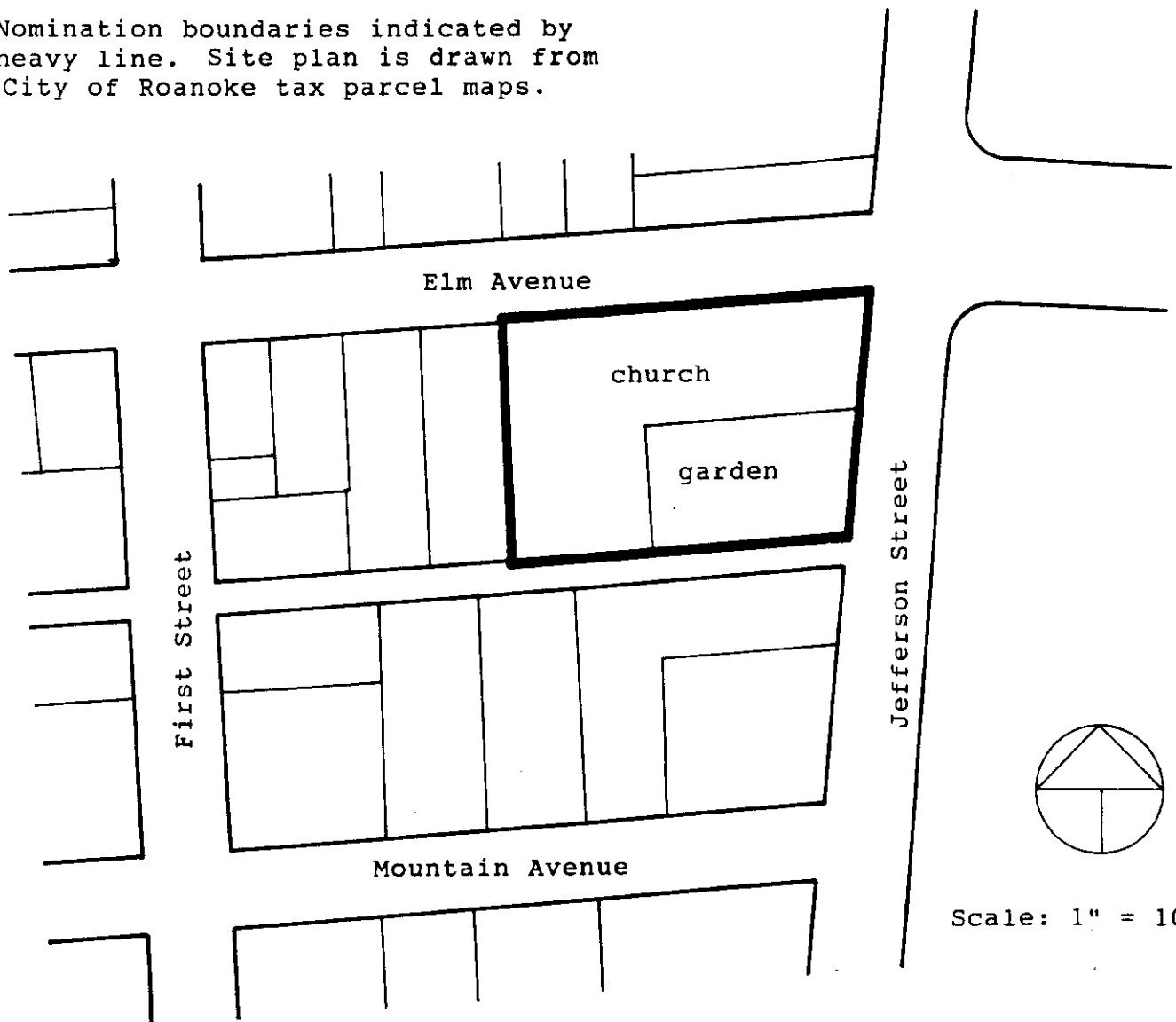
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Saint John's Episcopal Church

Roanoke, Va.

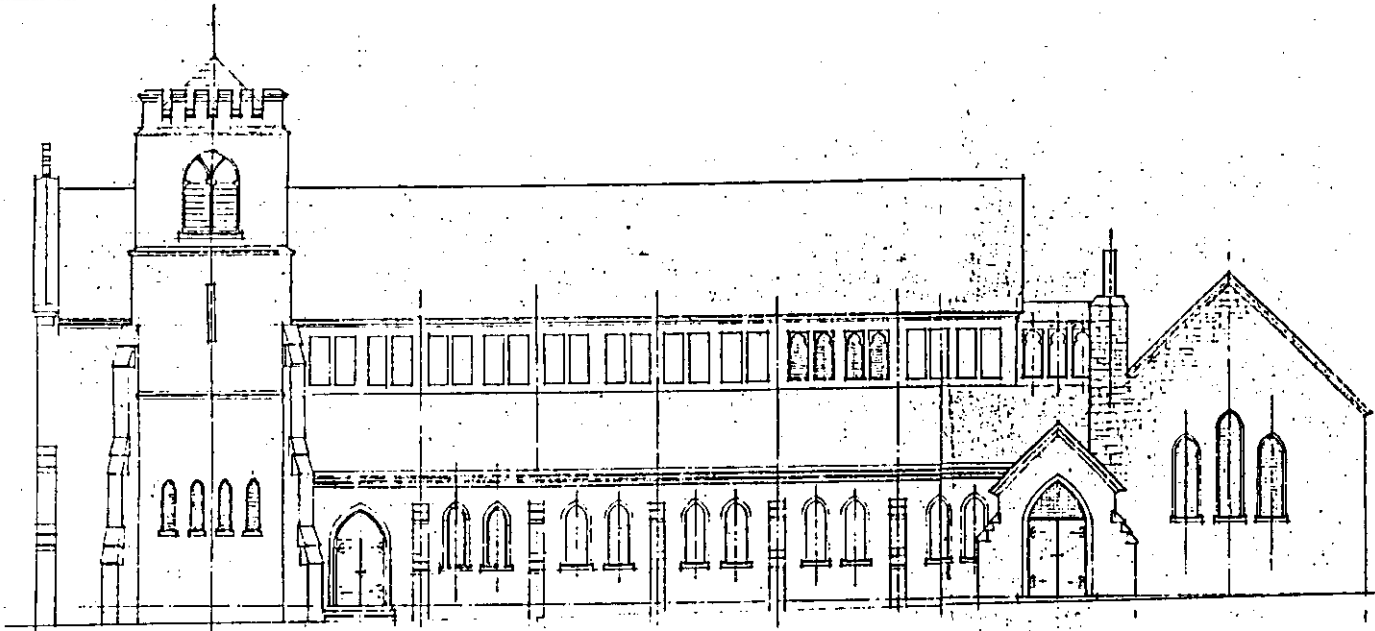
Nomination boundaries indicated by heavy line. Site plan is drawn from City of Roanoke tax parcel maps.



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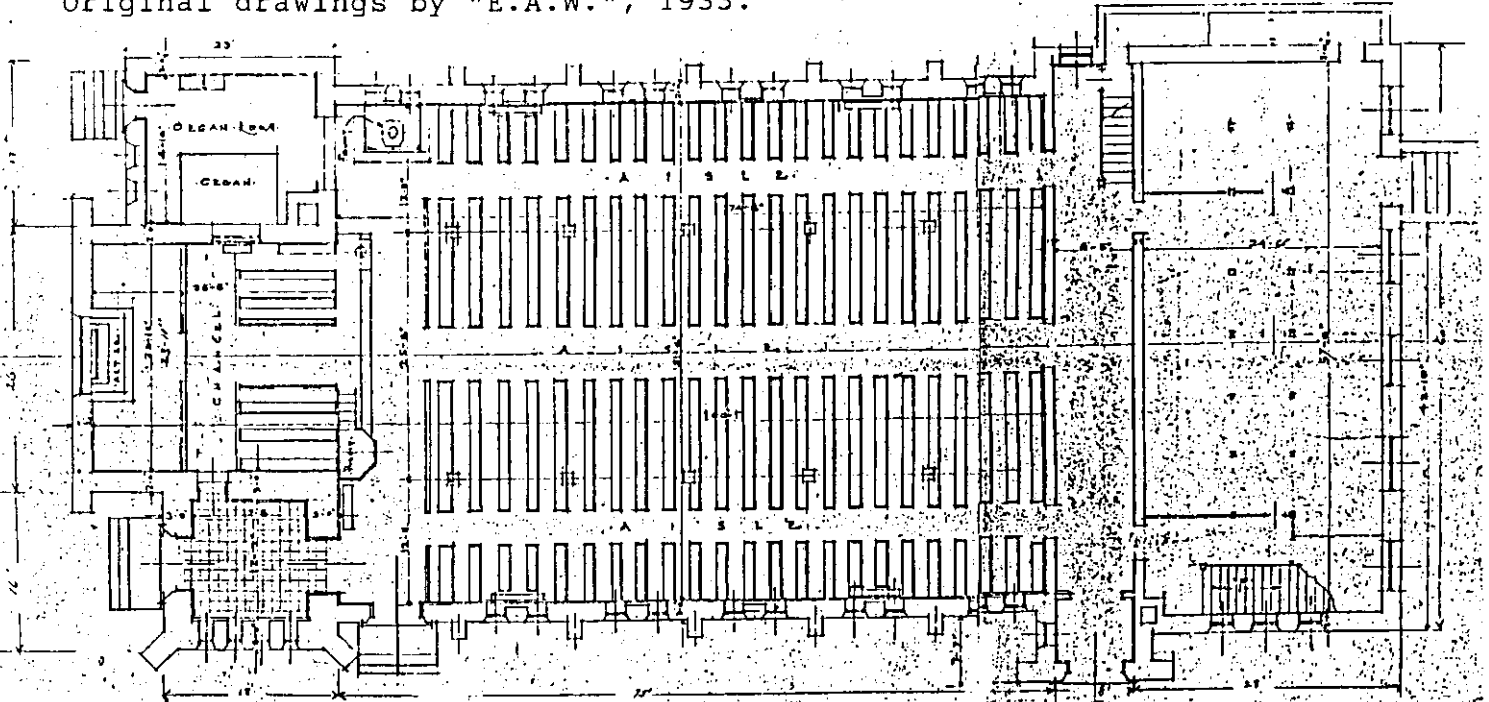
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ELM AVE. ELEVATION
SCALE 1/8" = 1'-0"

St. John's Episcopal Church, north elevation and first-story plan.
Original drawings by "E.A.W.", 1933.

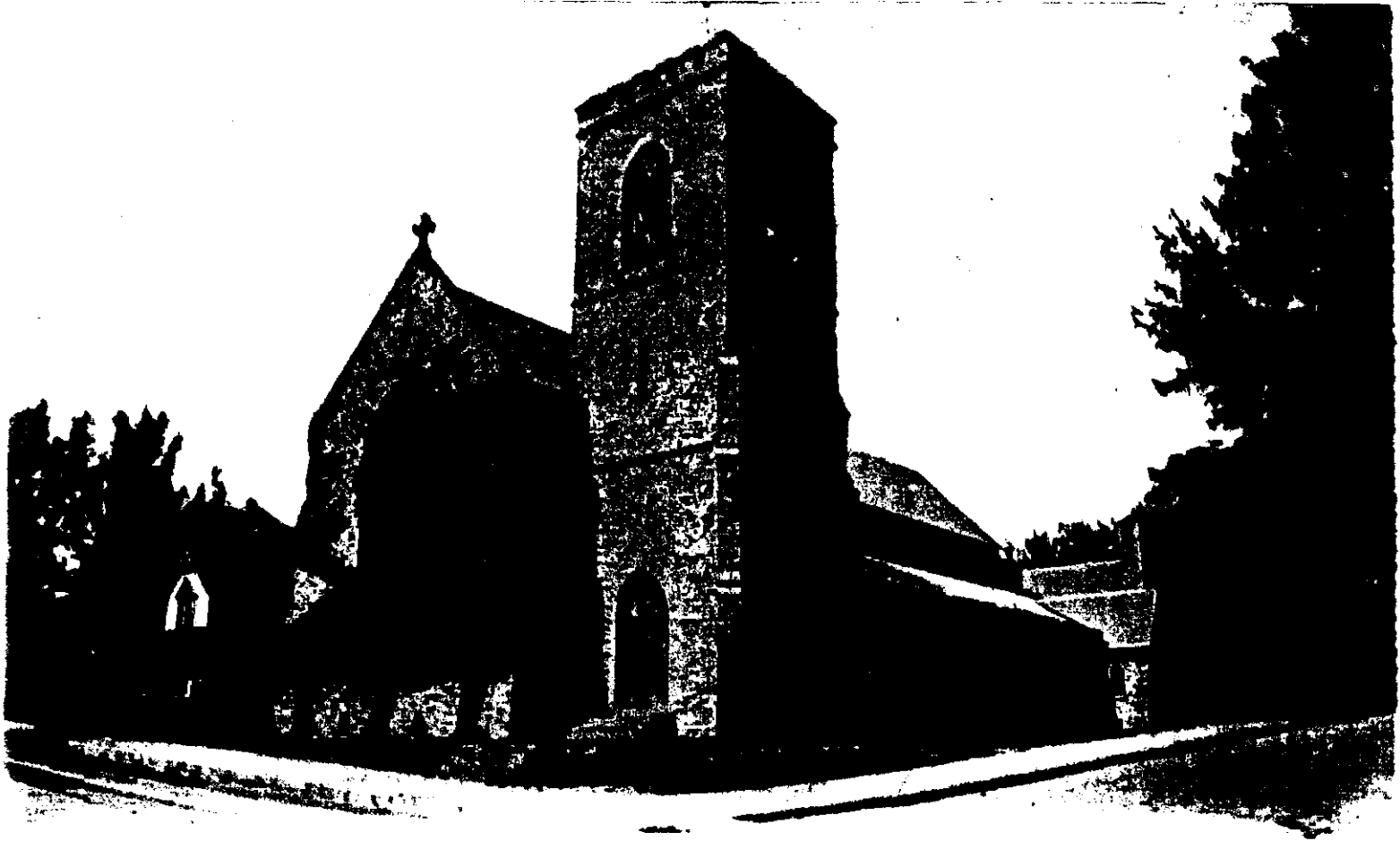


FIRST-STOREY PLAN
SCALE 1/8" = 1'-0"

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St. John's Church, Roanoke, Va.

Enlarged color photocopy of ca. 1900 post card depicting
St. John's Episcopal Church.

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8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

ARCHITECT / BUILDER

Burns, Charles Marquedant (architect: 1891-92 building)
Noland, William Churchill (resident architect: 1891-92 building)
Amweg, Frederick James (builder: 1891-92 building)
Boggs, Edward T. (architect: 1923 parish house)
Pettyjohn, J. P. (builder: 1923 parish house)
Smithey & Boynton (architect: 1958 addition)
James, Elizabeth Ewart (designer: late 1960s memorial garden)
Mounfield, William and John Thompson (architects: 1978 Chapel of
St. Luke's)
Freeman, William (architect: 1987 columbarium)

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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

St. John's Episcopal Church, located in Roanoke, Virginia, began in the late antebellum period as a small church serving the central Roanoke Valley. With the rapid urbanization of Roanoke during the late nineteenth century, St. John's grew to become the largest Episcopal parish in Southwestern Virginia. In 1919 the offices of the newly-created Diocese of Southwestern Virginia were located at the church. Many of Roanoke's most influential civic leaders of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were members of the congregation. The present St. John's church was built in 1891-92 to a design by Philadelphia architect Charles M. Burns. Modeled after the parish churches of medieval England, St. John's represents one of the most sophisticated nineteenth-century church buildings in Southwest Virginia. To the rear of the 1891-92 building is a 1923 Tudor Revival-style Parish House where the diocesan offices were located until 1949.

JUSTIFICATION OF CRITERIA

St. John's is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under the Criterion A Religion area of significance for its status as the largest and most prosperous Episcopal congregation in Southwest Virginia from the late nineteenth century through the present and for its distinction as the location of the offices of the Diocese of Southwest Virginia from 1919 until 1949. The church is eligible under the Criterion C Architecture area of significance for the sophistication of its Gothic-style church building. St. John's is currently listed as a contributing building in the Southwest Historic District (placed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1985). The period of significance for the church extends from 1891-92, the date of construction of the present church building, until 1941, covering most of the period during which the offices of the Diocese of Southwestern Virginia were located in the church.

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Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 4**EARLY HISTORY OF THE CHURCH**

St. John's dates its origins to the early 1830s when the Rev. Nicholas Hamner Cobbs of Bedford Parish began ministering to families of the Episcopal faith in the Roanoke Valley. By 1850 the church had grown sufficiently to become an independent parish and a lot was purchased in the town of Gainsborough where the first St. John's church, a frame building, was built.(8) During the period after the Civil War Gainsborough was eclipsed by the nearby railhead community of Big Lick and in 1876 St. John's moved to a site on Commerce Street in the latter town (the present Second Street in downtown Roanoke).(9) The second St. John's was a Gothic-style brick building with a steeply-pitched gable roof, lancet-arched windows and doors, and buttresses with stone weatherings ranged along the side walls and flanking a front vestibule. The first church building was sold to the congregation of the First Baptist Church which used it until the construction of the First Baptist Church on North Jefferson Street in 1898-1900, recently listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

The small railhead community of Big Lick underwent a dramatic transformation during the years 1876 to 1891. In 1881 the leadership of the Shenandoah Valley Railroad announced it would connect its line with the preexisting Norfolk and Western line at a point just east of the town. By 1883 the population of the newly named city of Roanoke surpassed 5,000; by the early 1890s it had approached 20,000. As Roanoke took shape in the 1880s the heights to the south of the downtown developed into the young city's most desirable residential neighborhood. This neighborhood, the core area of Old Southwest, became home to many of St. John's members who sought an opportunity to move their church nearer to their residences. Their chance came in 1891 when a lot at the corner of the main arterial streets of Jefferson and Elm went on sale; parishioner Samuel S. Brooke purchased the lot and offered it plus \$9,000 in exchange for the church's former property on Second Street.(10)

1891-92 BUILDING

St. John's hired Philadelphia architect Charles Marquedant Burns to design its new church. Resident Norfolk and Western officials representing the railroad's Philadelphia headquarters are believed to have been instrumental in securing Burns and Pennsylvania-based contractor Frederick James Amweg to design and build the church.(11) St. John's was completed in 1892 at the approximate cost of \$35,000. A Roanoke Times news item of December 27, 1891

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described the building as "the clerestory church ... an entirely new feature in church building in Virginia." The article also pointed out that the clerestory form was chosen for its superior interior illumination and ventilation and for its avoidance of expensive exterior buttressing. At the time of its construction the church was the largest in Roanoke, built to accommodate 600 communicants, although the congregation numbered only 217 in 1892.

TWENTIETH-CENTURY GROWTH

The congregation of St. John's grew steadily through the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. When Bishop Alfred Magill Randolph of the Diocese of Southern Virginia arrived on May 26, 1903 to consecrate the church, its congregation numbered 425.(12) In 1923, when the Parish House on Elm Avenue was completed, St. John's was reported to have 1,000 members, although the actual number of communicants through the 1920s and 1930s probably stood near 875.(13) At present (1991) the church has 1,330 members.

An important milestone in the history of the church was the creation of the Diocese of Southwestern Virginia. Formed from the thirty-two westernmost counties of the Diocese of Southern Virginia in 1919, the diocese originally contained eighty-two churches and missions, of which St. John's was the largest and most prosperous. Consequently, St. John's was chosen as the location of the diocesan offices and the first bishop of the new diocese, Bishop Robert Carter Jett, made St. John's his home church. The diocesan offices remained in the church building and the 1923 Parish House until 1949 when Evans House was built on nearby First Street.

Several of St. John's communicants and rectors have made distinguished contributions to the national church. The Rev. Karl Morgan Block, who served as rector from 1920 to 1926, later went on to become Bishop of California. A former assistant rector, the Rev. Frank Vest, currently serves as Bishop of Southern Virginia; a parishioner, the Rev. Vincent Warner, is currently the Bishop of Olympia, Washington.

Other communicants have served the electorate in the U. S. Senate or as members of the General Assembly in Richmond, or in municipal offices in Roanoke. One of the more prominent members of the congregation was Charles Francis Cocke, who served as Chancellor of the Diocese of Southwestern Virginia from 1919 until his death in the 1960s. Cocke was president of the Board of Trustees of Hollins

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College, president of the First National Exchange Bank of Roanoke, and he served a term as president of the American Bankers Association. A pivotal early member of the congregation was George Plater Tayloe, one of the Roanoke Valley's foremost planters during the antebellum period; the Breckenridges, Botetourt County's wealthiest landholders during the nineteenth century, were also early members. St. John's was the home church of six presidents of the Norfolk & Western Railway: Arthur C. Needles, W. J. Jenks, R. H. Smith, Stuart T. Saunders (also a president of the Penn Central Railroad), John P. Fishwick, and Robert B. Claytor.

St. John's and its members have always concerned themselves with the needs of the Roanoke community. The church long supported the two Episcopal mission churches in Roanoke, St. Peter's in Northwest Roanoke and St. Luke's in the Gainsborough neighborhood. A church member established the first library in the city, another ran the Roanoke Chapter of the American Red Cross during World War II. More recently the church has received citations from Mental Health Services, for the Community Living Club that assists and houses former mental hospital patients; from TAP, for the church's eighteen-year sponsorship of the Head Start program for preschoolers; and from Alcoholics Anonymous and an AIDS support group who regularly use church meeting space. In 1990 St. John's received national recognition as one of seven parishes in the country earning the designation of a Jubilee Parish for work and ministries for the poor, an honor conferred by the Mission in Church and Society of the national church.

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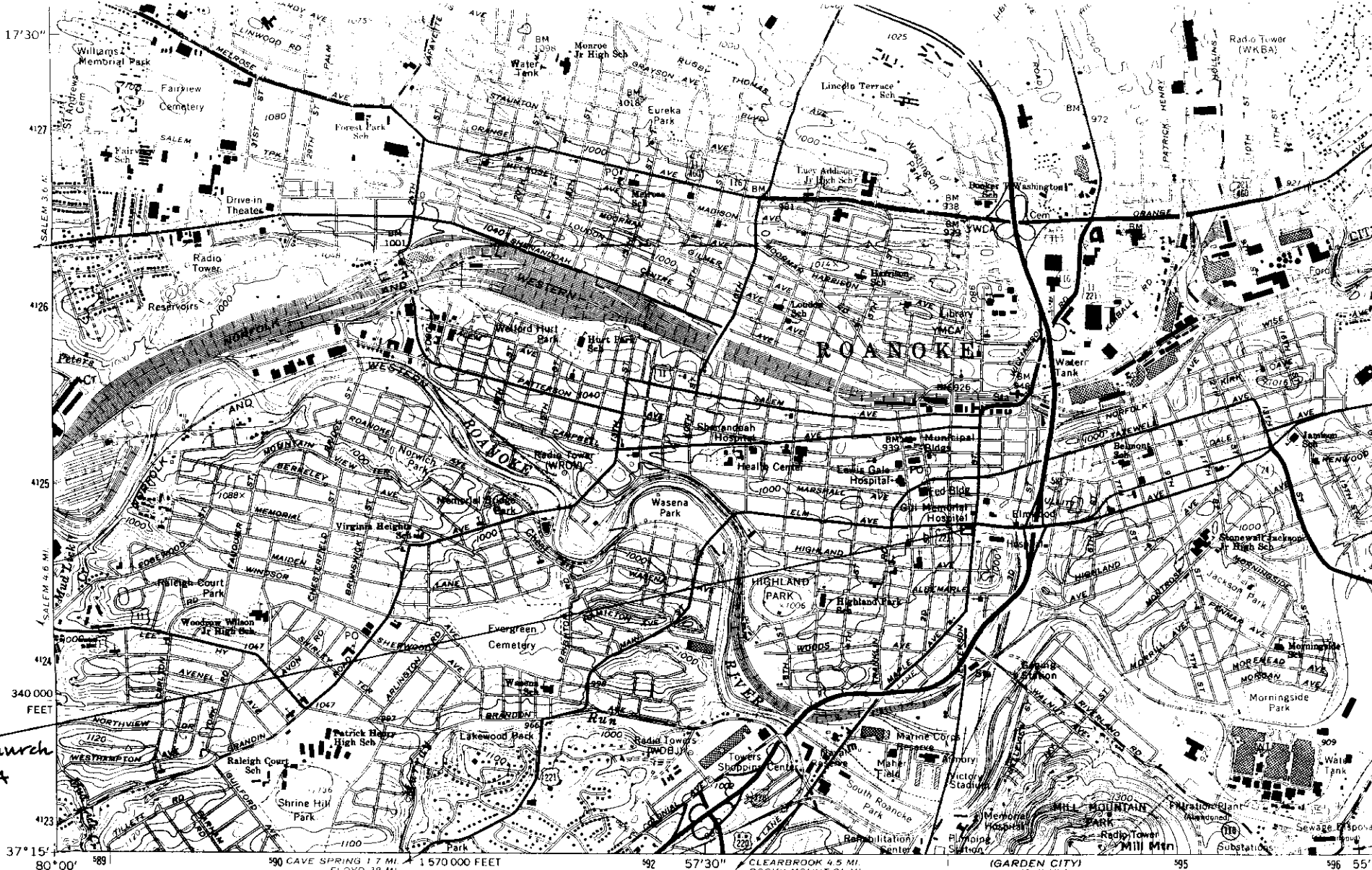
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St. John's
Episcopal Church
Roanoke, VA
UTM ZONE 17
E 513850
N 4124770

(BENT MOUNTAIN)
4958 11 NE

Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey

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Topography by photogrammetric methods from aerial photographs taken 1960. Field checked 1963

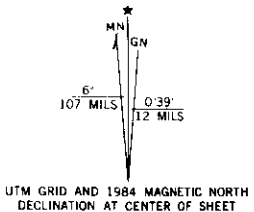
Polyconic projection. 10,000-foot grid ticks based on Virginia coordinate system, south zone
1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks, zone 17, shown in blue
1927 North American Datum

To place on the predicted North American Datum 1983
move the projection lines 10 meters south and
15 meters west as shown by dashed corner ticks

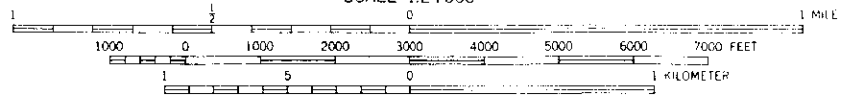
Fine red dashed lines indicate selected fence and field lines where generally visible on aerial photographs. This information is unchecked

Red tint indicates areas in which only landmark buildings are shown

There may be private inholdings within the boundaries of the National or State reservations shown on this map



UTM GRID AND 1984 MAGNETIC NORTH DECLINATION AT CENTER OF SHEET



SCALE 1:24,000
CONTOUR INTERVAL 20 FEET
NATIONAL GEODETIC VERTICAL DATUM OF 1929

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