

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 National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. 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.

1. Name of Property

Historic name: Gravel Hill Christian Church

Other names/site number: DHR ID# 022-5048

Name of related multiple property listing:

N/A

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

2. Location

Street & number: 197 Gravel Hill Road

City or town: New Castle State: VA County: Craig

Not For Publication: N/A Vicinity: x

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 at the following level(s) of significance:

___ national ___ statewide X local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

___A ___B XC ___D

 Signature of certifying official/Title:	<u>1.5.23</u> Date
<u>Virginia Department of Historic Resources</u> State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government	

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.	
Signature of commenting official:	Date
Title : State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government	

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4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
 determined eligible for the National Register
 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.)

- Private:
- Public – Local
- Public – State
- Public – Federal

Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

- Building(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object

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Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

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

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

RELIGION: religious facility

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

RELIGION: religious facility

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7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE VICTORIAN: Folk Victorian

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: WOOD: weatherboard; BRICK; STONE: limestone; METAL

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary Paragraph

Gravel Hill Christian Church, located at 197 Gravel Hill Road (State Route 663) in western Craig County, Virginia, is a one-story frame building built ca. 1855 and remodeled in the Folk Victorian style about 1900. The south-facing gable-fronted nave-form building has a limestone foundation, weatherboard siding, metal roofing, and a front entry/bell tower with ornate sawn detail. The spartan interior features a sanctuary directed toward a pulpit dais at the back (north) end with modern storage and bathroom spaces in the front corners. The approximately 1.3-acre nominated property, located on a spur of Gravel Hill overlooking the village of Simmonsville, affords views of the Sinking Creek Valley and surrounding ridgelines. The church is the only contributing resource on the property; there are no noncontributing resources. The property has good integrity of location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. The church building is well preserved and has been carefully maintained.

Narrative Description

Grounds/Setting

The church stands at an elevation of 2,400 feet above sea level and its parcel drains into Sinking Creek, a tributary of the New River. The gravel bed of Gravel Hill Road bounds the parcel on the south side, with Kent Cemetery (not associated with the church) in a wooded area across the road. Highway 42, Craig County's principal east-west highway, runs at the foot of the hill to the north of the church. The grounds are mostly lawn with a small gravel parking area in the front

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corner of the parcel. Large oaks and other deciduous trees stand along the back and side property lines. To the left of the church front entry's wheelchair ramp is a freestanding wood sign on a stone base, the sign reading "Gravel Hill Christian Church (Disciples)/Founded 1835." Near the west property line stands a cross made of scantling.

Church Exterior

The ca. 1855 south-facing gable-fronted nave-form building has a limestone foundation, weatherboard siding, metal roofing, and a front entry/bell tower with ornate sawn detail. The main feature on the south façade is a three-stage entry/bell tower added ca. 1900. The tower's bottom stage, which has a coursed limestone foundation like the church proper, is treated as a gable-fronted vestibule. At its center is an entry with two four-panel door leaves and a two-pane transom. The entry is reached by a short, modern, poured-concrete wheelchair ramp with metal handrails. The gable has cornice returns with wide frieze boards and, in the eaves, decorative sawn arch brackets. Similar cornice returns, frieze boards, and brackets decorate the front gable of the church proper.

The tower's middle stage is square in plan and tall in proportion, with a tripartite Palladian louvered vent. The tall center section of the vent has an arched lintel board and is flanked by small quarter-circle fanfold ornaments. The top stage is an open belfry under a steep pyramidal roof. The belfry's four corner posts are ornamented with long outward-facing brackets with double vasiform profiles. There are also small inward-facing arch brackets at the top of the posts. Between the posts are sawn balustrades with a stylized vasiform baluster repeat. One of the balustrades is missing its sawn detail. Between the tops of the corner posts run narrow openwork friezes with flat cutout elements that evoke the full-round spindles of a spindle frieze. The top of the pyramidal roof is flat, indicating the former existence of a simple wood finial which appears in photos taken in 1935.

The entry/bell tower is flanked by tall windows with large four-over-four wood sashes. Identical windows appear on the side elevations, two to a side, and all six windows have cast iron pintels for former shutters. The rear elevation has a flush gable without overhanging eaves or cornice returns. On the rear elevation is a hip-roofed angled apse with one-over-one wood sash windows and a foundation with a mix of local limestone and colorful sandstone. The sandstone appears to be Tennessee Crab Orchard Stone, perhaps left over from a mid-nineteenth-century house construction project in the area. To the right of the apse is an entry with a four-panel door and modern wood steps. At the center of the roof ridge is a small brick stove flue.

Church Interior

The sanctuary and tower vestibule have carpeted wood floors, painted tongue-and-groove ceilings, and plaster-finish walls above a wainscot of vertical beaded tongue-and-groove with a beaded chair rail. The wainscot has modern ripple-pattern graining over a layer or layers of brown and/or tan paint over blue green. The tower vestibule, which has a modern closet with louvered doors, communicates with the sanctuary through an opening with a trapezoidal head. The chamfered jambs of the opening rise to molded caps.

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In the two front corners of the sanctuary are enclosures added in 1998. The enclosures have gypsum-board stud walls, balustraded tops, and vinyl panel doors. The east enclosure contains a bathroom with a floor hatch to the crawlspace. The west enclosure is used for storage. The enclosures stand where Sunday School classes formerly met. The triangular classroom areas were created by drawing heavy tan curtains that hung from rods that spanned at an angle from the front window frames to the front side window frames. Where the supports for the curtain rods formerly attached are areas of brown and tan paint from before the current brown finish.

The sanctuary is illuminated by pendant fluorescent fixtures and has ceiling fans. At the center of the ceiling is a covered flue hole for a stove flue that combined flues from wood-burning stoves which stood by the side walls. Hooks for wires that supported the two flues as they rose to combine into the single center flue survive to each side of the flue hole. At the apse end of the space is a low dais that ends before the back entry but extends to the corner on the other side, where a piano is located. The dais steps up to elevate the pulpit lectern, which is of late nineteenth century or ca. 1900 manufacture with decorative brackets and other period detail. The chairs in front of the lectern and in the apse behind date to ca. 1900. The apse itself is framed by an opening with a trapezoidal head. The communion table is recent; the older communion table stands at the front of the sanctuary where it is used to store and display church memorabilia.

The pews are arranged to form aisles on both sides. The pews are simple in form and detail, cut-nailed, hand-planed, and with a two-tone grained finish. The pew ends have a mottled brown finish, perhaps sponged and perhaps meant to evoke curly maple, whereas the pew seats and backs have a lighter oak finish. Narrow angled shims were attached to the bases of the pew ends to lean the pews back slightly for comfort. The floor hatch in the bathroom provides views of the floor structure. The floor joists are sash sawn and connect to heavy hewn sills and a hewn center or summer beam. To one of the joists near the hatch a piece of wood is attached with cut nails. The stump of a tree cut down when the church was built survives in a part of the crawlspace which is not visible from the hatch. Also in the crawlspace is at least one foundation pier consisting of stacked limestone blocks.

Integrity Statement

Gravel Hill Christian Church possesses good overall integrity. The church, which stands at its original location, possesses the historic exterior character it attained ca. 1900 with only minor subsequent additions and alterations such as the front wheelchair ramp, the current metal roofing, and the foundation under the apse, the stonework of which likely dates to the mid-twentieth century and may have replaced an open wood post foundation. The interior is also well-preserved, though it has undergone somewhat more change than the exterior, namely the addition of the front-corner enclosures in 1998. Otherwise, the interior appears very much as it did ca. 1900, even to the point of retaining pews and altar furnishings from that period or earlier. The church therefore possesses high integrity of design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. The unspoiled historic and natural setting of fields, forests, mountains, and the village of Simmonsville, just visible from the property, also contributes to the property's high integrity of feeling and association

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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 grave
- D. A cemetery
- E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F. A commemorative property
- G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

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Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

Ca. 1855-ca. 1900

Significant Dates

N/A

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Smith, Adam (carpenter)

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Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

Gravel Hill Christian Church, located in Craig County, Virginia, was built ca. 1855 to serve churchgoers in the county's scenic Sinking Creek Valley. Carpenter Adam Smith built the simple frame building, which replaced a ca. 1827 log meeting house. Around 1900 an ornate entry/bell tower was added and the church was refurbished inside and out. It stands today as a well-preserved example of the county's simple but elegant traditional rural churches, which are typified by a rectangular footprint, symmetrical fenestration, a centered entry on the gable end façade, Victorian-era decorative elements, and an interior plan consisting of a vestibule and sanctuary. Gravel Hill Christian Church is eligible for listing in the National Register under Criterion C in the Architecture area of significance. The Mount Carmel and New Bethel churches, elsewhere in Craig County, share specific stylistic features with Gravel Hill's remodeling, close enough to suggest the same carpenter worked on all three buildings. The period of significance extends from ca. 1855, the date of construction and the period to which basic features like the building's form, structure, foundation, and fenestration pattern date, to ca. 1900, embracing the remodeling of the building in the late nineteenth or early twentieth century. The building is eligible at the local level of significance. Criterion Consideration A applies because the church is owned by a religious institution and is used for religious purposes, while the property is significant for its architectural design.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

Historic Context

Gravel Hill Christian Church grew out of visits to the area by adherents of an approach to Protestant Christianity that would develop into the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) movement. According to H. Jackson Darst, a historian of the Christian Church in Virginia, the movement arose from the preaching of former Presbyterians Thomas Campbell and his son Alexander Campbell. Thomas and associates formed the Christian Association of Washington (Pennsylvania) in 1809, which asserted as a core principle that "division in the Christian world was a sin which could be overcome only by a return to the pattern of the church enunciated in the New Testament." According to a 1935 history of Gravel Hill Christian Church written by W. G. Johnston (b. ca. 1870), a Sinking Creek Valley native who pastored for Christian Church congregations in Virginia, North Carolina, and Missouri, the earliest known adherent of the movement to visit the Craig County area was Joseph Thomas in 1817. Thomas was followed by affiliated ministers from Ohio who visited the Sinking Creek Valley during the years 1818 to 1828. By 1827 a log church known as Antioch Meeting House was built or was in the process of construction on Gravel Hill a short distance to the southeast of the current church. Johnston

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credited the establishment of the Antioch congregation to Thomas's pioneering work in the area.¹

In the 1830s, a fervent young minister named Dr. Chester Bullard (1809-93), based in Snowville in Pulaski County, began to organize Christian Church congregations in Southwest Virginia. He formally organized the Antioch churchgoers as a Christian Church congregation in 1835, a year the congregation thereafter marked as the date of its founding. Though based elsewhere, Bullard made the Craig County area and specifically Antioch/Gravel Hill a special focus. According to a 1959 history of the Christian Church in Virginia, by 1836 six churches including Gravel Hill were associated with the "Bullard Movement."²

A leader of the congregation during the early years was Jacob McPherson, "a man of deep piety" who was considered the congregation's first elder and in whose home early church meetings were held. It was McPherson who led the charge when the log meeting house fell into disrepair and needed improvement. "Look Look," he wrote in an 1850 plea to the membership, "What at the open cracks and windows of the church will you aid in repairing it[.] if you will I will thank you and hope God will reward you for your kindness; I have a subscription but I fear not sufficient to complete what is wanting to be done." McPherson urged those who could pay to deposit their donations at Esqr [Esquire] Younger's Store and those who could not pay to "throw in wat they feel willing to do" by contributing their labor.³

Shortly after McPherson's efforts the congregation decided to build anew rather than repair the log building. McPherson's grandson, John Lloyd McPherson (1850-1943), recalled the circumstances surrounding the construction of the new building, the current church, in a reminiscence published in the 1935 history. "There are few if any now living, except myself, who remember the first 'meeting house' erected on the hill overlooking the quiet and disappearing little village of Simmonsville," McPherson wrote, adding:

When the new church building was being considered, there was considerable discussion about putting on a self-supporting roof. Adam Smith was the contractor, and he said it could be done. I am now almost eighty-five years old and I expect the only one living who was present at the dedication. I was quite small, but I remember distinctly that during the service of dedication there came a severe electric storm with a heavy downpour of rain. In those days everyone went on foot or horseback. There was not a buggy in the valley. When the storm came there was a great rush to get saddles off. They were carried into the old church. I recall the remark, 'How will each one know his own

¹ Darst, *Ante-Bellum Virginia Disciples*, 1; Johnston, "History of The Gravel Hill Christian Church," 3-5; Miller, "History and Membership of The Gravel Hill (Antioch) Christian Church." A number of individuals contributed to the research and writing of this report, foremost among them the sponsor of the project, Claudia Anderson, and Gravel Hill Christian Church member and church historian Judith Ayers. Diane Givens and Jane Echols Johnston also provided assistance, as did Michael Pulice and Lena Sweeten McDonald with the Virginia Department of Historic Resources.

² Johnston, "History of The Gravel Hill Christian Church," 5; Darst, *Ante-Bellum Virginia Disciples*, 75.

³ Johnston, "History of The Gravel Hill Christian Church," 5-6.

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saddle?’ A large crowd attended the dedication. There were few churches then, and no other gatherings of importance. People came to Gravel Hill Church from John’s Creek, from Craig’s Creek, and for miles up and down the valley.

The dedication service recalled by McPherson presumably occurred about 1855, considering McPherson’s age at the time. The contractor was carpenter Adam Smith (b. ca. 1821), who lived at the foot of Gravel Hill in Simmonsville. According to long-standing church tradition, the pews, which appear to date to the same period as the church, were made by individual families, probably to the carpenter’s specifications. The 1864 “Map of Craig, Giles, Montgomery and Pulaski counties, Virginia” shows Gravel Hill Church and refers to Simmonsville as Gravel Hill Post Office.⁴

Architectural evidence and various historical clues indicate the antebellum church was remodeled at the end of the nineteenth century or possibly the early years of the twentieth century. The historical evidence consists largely of the absence of references to the construction of a new building during the period. John Lloyd McPherson’s detailed reminiscence references the construction of a building in the 1850s but not its replacement. W. G. Johnston, the author of the 1935 history in which McPherson’s reminiscence appears, also fails to mention a new church. Johnston, born in the community around 1870, earned a doctorate of divinity degree and after 1900 pastored at Christian churches in Kinston, North Carolina; Roanoke, Virginia; and St. Louis, Missouri. He presumably lived in his native community until leaving for college around 1890 or later and would have kept apprised of developments at Gravel Hill thereafter, so his failure to mention rebuilding during the period suggests none occurred. A third historical source, compiled by long-time church member George Chapman Miller in 1904, also fails to mention the construction of a new building, though Miller’s history was focused more on the membership than the church building per se. Lastly, Craig County historian Jane Echols Johnston (no close relation to W. G. Johnston), who has known over the course of her life residents of the Gravel Hill area whose memories extended back to the late nineteenth century, has never heard that the antebellum church was replaced. It should be noted that the remodeling is also missing from the historical accounts, but the preponderance of evidence points to remodeling rather than wholesale replacement.⁵

“Gravel Hill always made much of her music,” John Lloyd McPherson recalled in 1935. George Hendrickson, a son-in-law of Jacob McPherson, who studied vocal music in the Valley of

⁴ Ibid., 7, 9; Findagrave; Jane Echols Johnston personal communication; “Map of Craig, Giles, Montgomery and Pulaski counties, Virginia;” Judith Ayers personal communication. The publication *Churches of Craig County* (2012) dates the “current building” to 1855 (p. 55).

⁵ Jane Echols Johnston personal communication; Johnston, “History of The Gravel Hill Christian Church;” Miller, “History and Membership of The Gravel Hill (Antioch) Christian Church.” The list of pastors in Johnston’s history suggests the pulpit was more or less continuously occupied from 1892 through 1903, followed by intermittent pastoring to 1921. This suggests the congregation was in good health during the 1890s and more likely to have undertaken remodeling during that period. Rev. Joseph Thomas Watson, who began preaching at Gravel Hill and other area Christian churches in 1906, wrote that there was no regular preaching at any of the churches at the time (*Churches of Craig County*, 94).

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Virginia and compiled a shape note book, contributed to Gravel Hill's music program. According to a 1939 article in the *New Castle Record*, Gravel Hill was "famed for having the best and the sweetest musicians in Southwest Virginia." The writer credited the quality of the church's music program to classes taught in New Castle by itinerant vocal music instructors Albert, Floyd, and Marion Lugar. The earliest photo of the church, probably taken around 1890, shows a large group of adults and children singing to the accompaniment of a portable piano or organ outside the building. The photo shows the northeast rear corner of the building and part of the shutter of the adjacent window.⁶ A 1935 photo taken during the church's centennial celebration shows that the building's exterior has not changed substantially since that time and is an indication of its robust congregation during the Great Depression.



Figure 1. The church's centennial celebration, August 23, 1935. Photo from *Centennial of The Gravel Hill Christian Church, August 23, 1935*, view facing north.

Gravel Hill was the mother church of several Christian churches in Craig County. Johnston listed Level Green Christian Church, Bethel Christian Church, and Forks of Johns Creek Christian

⁶ Johnston, "History of The Gravel Hill Christian Church," 11; Book, "Craig Musicians;" Craig County Historical Society files.

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Church as daughter churches. In 1911 the Gravel Hill, Level Green, and Bethel trustees and the trustees of another area Christian church, Mount Carmel, jointly purchased a house and lot on the “church road” below Gravel Hill to serve as a parsonage for a minister to serve all four congregations. The parsonage remained in the ownership of the four churches until 1967.⁷

Gravel Hill Christian Church was rehabilitated twice in the second half of the twentieth century. The interior was painted and carpeting and curtains added in the 1970s. The fluorescent light fixtures may date to the same period. A more substantial rehabilitation was completed in 1998, resulting in the addition of the restroom and storage areas in the front corners of the sanctuary. Church member Judith Ayers notes that her father, H. Preston Caldwell (1908-81), a farmer and painter, probably did much of the painting in the church during this period. Gravel Hill Christian Church is currently open for Bible study and communion service each Sunday with a sermon on special occasions such as Easter and Christmas. The church operates independently but is affiliated with the Disciples of Christ.⁸

Criterion C Architecture Area of Significance

Evidence in support of an initial ca. 1855 phase of construction for Gravel Hill Christian Church is provided by the building’s architecture in addition to the historical evidence presented above. The building’s floor structure was built with cut nails, and though such nails are not specifically associated with the antebellum period, cut nails passed out of general use by around 1890, which on stylistic grounds would be about the earliest date the remodeling may have occurred (which in turn suggests the antebellum building was remodeled and not rebuilt). Cut nails were used on occasion after ca. 1890, so they are not conclusive evidence for two phases of work, but such an interpretation is in keeping with the historical evidence. Other aspects of the floor construction such as the hewing of the sills and center beam and the sash-sawing of the joists suggest a date before the end of the nineteenth century. Circular-sawing was probably introduced to the area by the end of the antebellum period and would have been standard by the end of the century but, as with cut nail use, it is conceivable hewing and sash-sawing continued to ca. 1900 locally. In other words, like the presence of cut nails, hewing and sash-sawing suggest construction before the end of the nineteenth century but are not definitive evidence.⁹

The late antebellum period, the period during which Gravel Hill in its original form is assumed to have been built, was the heyday of the Greek Revival style for church construction in the region. The style was a late phase of the Renaissance revival of classical architecture and specifically revived classical Greek forms such as pedimented temple fronts. The style was used for town churches in Blacksburg and Christiansburg in neighboring Montgomery County and

⁷ Johnston, “History of The Gravel Hill Christian Church,” 15; Craig County Deed Book P, p. 254, and Deed Book 28, p. 137.

⁸ Judith Ayers personal communication; “History of Gravel Hill Christian Church.” Prior to the interior restroom outhouses for male and female use stood behind the church.

⁹ Pezzoni, *Architecture of Historic Rockbridge*, 150; Worhsam et al, “Montgomery County Reconnaissance Level Survey,” 173. Gravel Hill’s roof and tower construction were not available for examination.

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Fincastle in neighboring Botetourt County during the 1850s. If Gravel Hill church had a style originally, it would likely have been the Greek Revival style. The building's rectangular footprint, front gable form, symmetrical fenestration, and pedimented gables with returned eaves and plain friezes are broadly associated with vernacular interpretations of the Greek Revival style in rural Virginia, but also are aspects of Colonial Revival, Queen Anne, and Folk Victorian design.¹⁰ Therefore, given the building's remodeled form with the ca. 1900 bell tower, the ca. 1855 building may have been astylistic. If so, this may have reflected a doctrinal desire for simplicity on the part of the congregation or, alternatively or in addition, a desire to keep costs down. The term "self-supporting roof" used in reference to the ca. 1855 building referred to a truss roof that did not require support posts inside the building perimeter.¹¹

Gravel Hill's two-bay side elevations may be the strongest formal evidence of an antebellum date of construction. The former Blacksburg Presbyterian Church, built in 1847, has two-bay side elevations, whereas Sinking Creek Valley Christian churches built during the ca. 1900 period have additional side windows. For example, Mount Carmel Christian Church, which was built or had its entry/bell tower added in 1899, has four-bay sides, and the ca. 1900 New Bethel Christian Church has three-bay sides. Had Gravel Hill been built de novo ca. 1900, it too would probably have had more functional and stylish three- or four-bay side elevations.¹²

The ornament added to Gravel Hill Christian Church around 1900 (probably in the 1890s) was of a type produced by most of the larger mechanized woodworking establishments of the era. The ornament shows the influence of the Italianate and Gothic Revival styles but may be considered broadly as Folk Victorian. The entry/bell tower has a formal complexity, with gable-fronted, boxlike, and pyramidal forms, in keeping with the Queen Anne style, another genre of the Victorian era. Rural Craig County has no church buildings that are individually listed in the Virginia Landmarks Register and National Register of Historic Places; Gravel Hill will be the first. The Mount Carmel Christian and Lutheran Church (DHR #022-0039) and New Bethel Christian Church (DHR #022-5025) share specific stylistic features with Gravel Hill's remodeling, close enough to suggest the same carpenter worked on all three buildings. New Bethel Christian Church stands about 4.45 miles northeast of Gravel Hill Christian Church and stands alongside Cumberland Gap Road, from which Gravel Hill Road forks, while Mount Carmel Christian and Lutheran Church is about 12 miles (as the crow flies) northeast of Gravel Hill Christian Church. Each building has a three-stage entry/bell tower with a gable-fronted vestibule stage and an open belfry stage, the latter with distinctive outward-facing double-vasiform brackets. Mount Carmel also has widely-spaced raking brackets in its main and

¹⁰ Chris Novelli et al., *Classic Commonwealth: Virginia Architecture from the Colonial Era to 1940* (Richmond: Virginia Department of Historic Resources, 2015), 45-46.

¹¹ Pezzoni, "Blacksburg: An Architectural Overview," 64-65; Niederer, *Town of Fincastle*, 43-47, 50-51. The Greek Revival style was chosen for Snowville Christian Church in Pulaski County, the headquarters church of Rev. Chester Bullard, who was active in establishing the Antioch/Gravel Hill congregation in the 1830s; however the 1864 date of construction for the Snowville church would rule it out as a source of inspiration for the design of Gravel Hill (Worsham, "Snowville Christian Church").

¹² Worsham et al, "Montgomery County Reconnaissance Level Survey," 179; Jane Echols Johnston personal communication.

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vestibule gables that are similar in form to those at the same locations at Gravel Hill, though Mount Carmel also has the brackets under its main and vestibule cornice returns, unlike Gravel Hill, and the brackets are affixed to decorative backings. The similar improvements made to Gravel Hill ca. 1900 suggest a healthy state of church affairs but also possibly a desire to compete architecturally with the new Christian churches. Lastly, the ca. 1890 photo which shows the northeast back corner of Gravel Hill church appears to show a two-tone paint scheme on the corner board. This may have been the polychromatic white with green trim treatment common during the period. Mount Carmel has vestiges of such a scheme, with green shutters and a green belfry roof.¹³

¹³ The architectural analysis in this paragraph is largely based on photos of Craig County churches similar to Gravel Hill taken by architectural historian Michael Pulice.

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9. Major Bibliographical References

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Gravel Hill Christian Church historic exhibit. Gravel Hill Christian Church, Newport, Va.

"The History of Gravel Hill Christian Church." Ca. 2000. Historic exhibit text at Gravel Hill Christian Church, Newport, Va.

Johnston, Jane Echols. Personal communication with the author, 2022.

Johnston, W. G. "History of The Gravel Hill Christian Church." In *Centennial of The Gravel Hill Christian Church, August 23, 1935*. Pamphlet, 1935.

"Map of Craig, Giles, Montgomery and Pulaski counties, Virginia." 1864.

Miller, George Chapman, comp. "History and Membership of The Gravel Hill (Antioch) Christian Church." Report, 1904 (1974 copy).

New Castle Record (New Castle, Va.).

Gravel Hill Christian Church
Name of Property

Craig County, Virginia
County and State

Niederer, Frances J. *The Town of Fincastle, Virginia*. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1965.

Novelli, Chris, et al. *Classic Commonwealth: Virginia Architecture from the Colonial Era to 1940*. Richmond: Virginia Department of Historic Resources, 2015.

Pezzoni, J. Daniel. *The Architecture of Historic Rockbridge*. Lexington, Va.: Historic Lexington Foundation, 2015.

_____. "Blacksburg: An Architectural Overview." In Clara B. Cox ed. *A Special Place for 200 Years: A History of Blacksburg, Virginia*. Blacksburg, Va.: Town of Blacksburg, 1998.

Pulice, Michael. "Gravel Hill Christian Church." Virginia Department of Historic Resources Preliminary Information Form (PIF) for Individual Properties, 2018.

_____. Personal communication with the author, 2022.

Roanoke Times (Roanoke, Va.).

Worsham, Gibson. "Snowville Christian Church." National Register of Historic Places Inventory-Nomination Form, 1986.

Worsham, Gibson, et al. "Montgomery County Reconnaissance Level Survey." Report, 1986.

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 # _____
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

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

Gravel Hill Christian Church
Name of Property

Craig County, Virginia
County and State

Name of repository: Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond, Virginia

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): DHR ID# 022-5048

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property approximately 1.3 acres

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1. Latitude: 37.387140 Longitude: -80.359960

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The historic boundary corresponds to the perimeter lines of tax parcel number 105-A-36 as recorded by Craig County, Virginia. The true and correct historic boundary is shown on the attached Sketch Map/Photo Key and Tax Parcel Map.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The historic boundary corresponds to the modern tax parcel on which stands the sole contributing resource, Gravel Hill Christian Church. The lot size has not changed over the course of the property's history. The property's historic setting is included within the boundary.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: J. Daniel Pezzoni
organization: Landmark Preservation Associates
street & number: 6 Houston St.
city or town: Lexington state: Virginia zip code: 24450
e-mail: _gilespezzoni@rockbridge.net
telephone: (540) 464-5315
date: August 18, 2022

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.

Gravel Hill Christian Church
Name of Property

Craig County, Virginia
County and State

- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log

Name of Property: Gravel Hill Christian Church

City or Vicinity: New Castle vicinity County: Craig State: Virginia

Photographer: J. Daniel Pezzoni Date Photographed: July 2022 (except for photo 7)

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

Photo 1 of 6.

South (front) and east sides of church, view facing west.

Photo 2 of 6.

North (rear) and east sides of church, view facing southeast.

Photo 3 of 6.

Belfry, view facing southwest.

Photo 4 of 6.

Sanctuary facing pulpit.

Photo 5 of 6.

Sanctuary facing front entry.

Photo 6 of 6.

Pews to left of pulpit.

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.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including 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 Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

Legend

 County Boundaries

TOPOGRAPHIC MAP

Gravel Hill Christian Church

Craig County, VA

DHR No. 022-5048



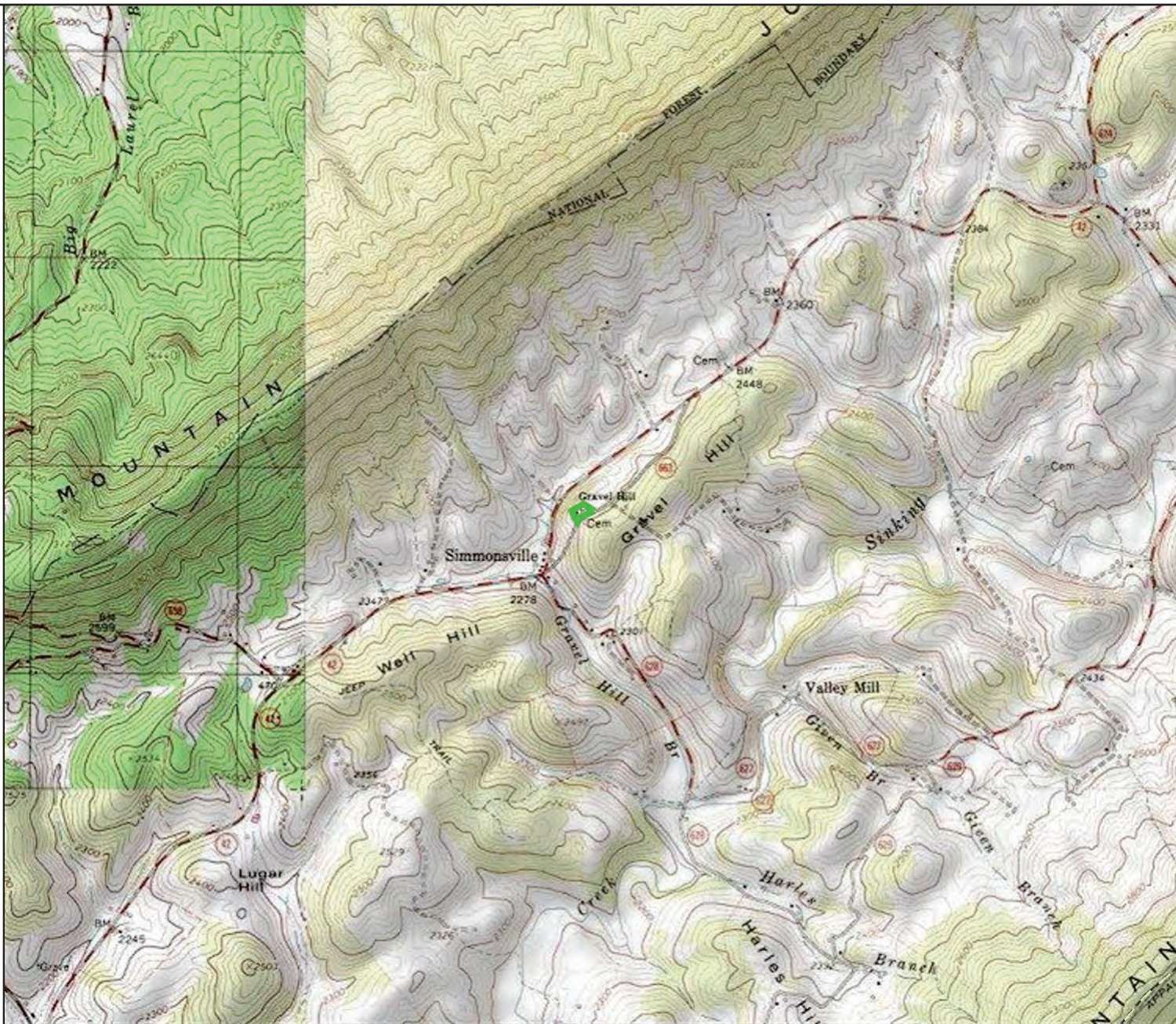
Historic Boundary



Feet

0 600 1200 1800 2400

1:36,112 / 1"=3,009 Feet



Title:

Date: 10/26/2022

DISCLAIMER: Records of the Virginia Department of Historic Resources (DHR) have been gathered over many years from a variety of sources and the representation depicted is a cumulative view of field observations over time and may not reflect current ground conditions. The map is for general information purposes and is not intended for engineering, legal or other site-specific uses. Map may contain errors and is provided "as-is". More information is available in the DHR Archives located at DHR's Richmond office.

Notice if AE sites: Locations of archaeological sites may be sensitive to the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), and the Archaeological Resources Protection Act (ARPA) and Code of Virginia §2.2-3705.7 (10). Release of precise locations may threaten archaeological sites and historic resources.



Legend

County Boundaries

AERIAL VIEW - VICINITY
Gravel Hill Christian Church
Craig County, VA
DHR No. 022-5048

Historic Boundary



Feet



0 600 1200 1800 2400
1:36,112 / 1"=3,009 Feet



Title:

Date: 10/26/2022

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Legend

County Boundaries

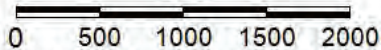
ROAD MAP

**Gravel Hill Christian Church
Craig County, VA
DHR No. 022-5048**

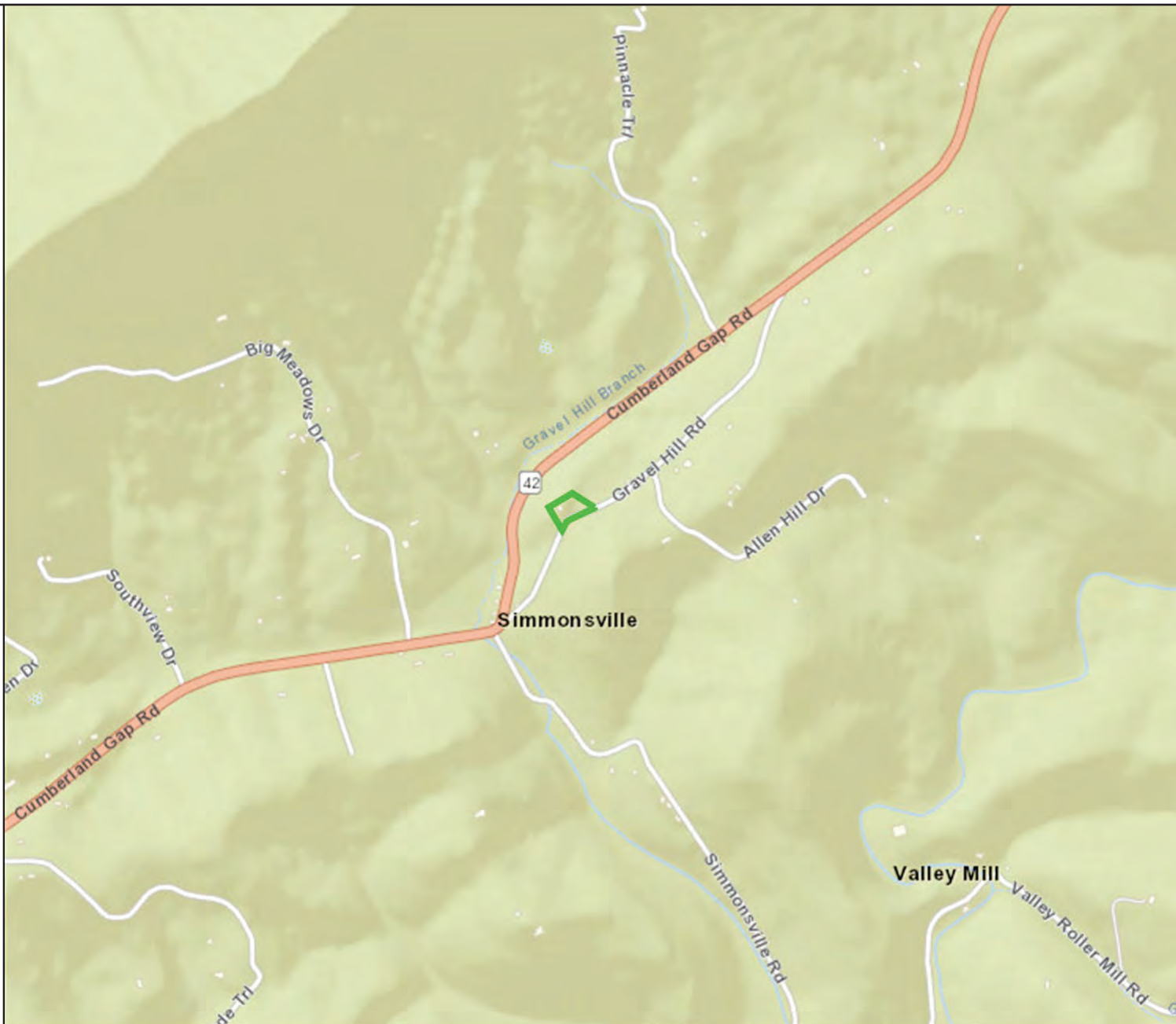
Historic Boundary



Feet



1:18,056 / 1"=1,505 Feet



Title:

Date: 10/26/2022

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Gravel Hill Christian Church

197 Gravel Hill Road
New Castle, Virginia
DHR ID# 022-5048

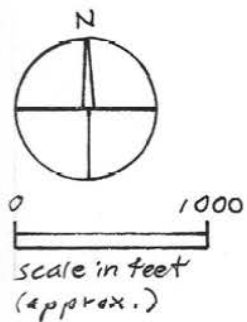
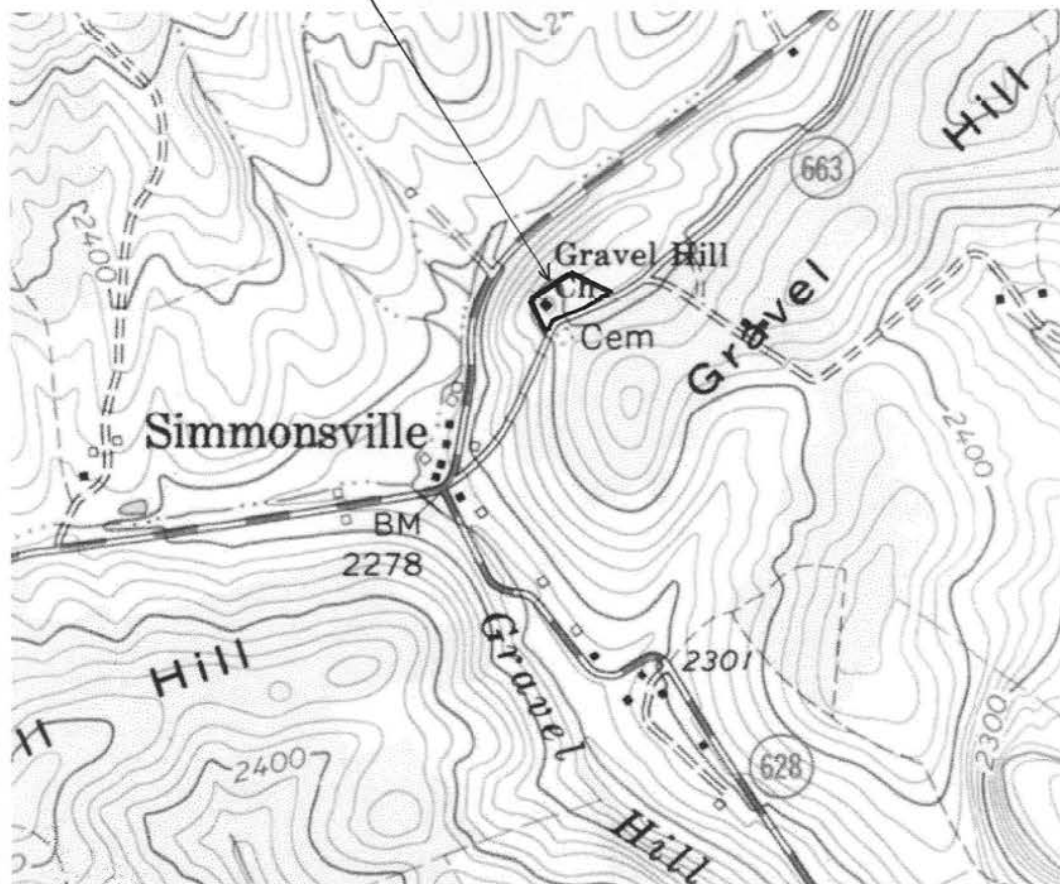
National Register of Historic Places Location Map

Latitude/longitude coordinates:

1. Latitude: 37.387140

Longitude: -80.359960

Location of NR property

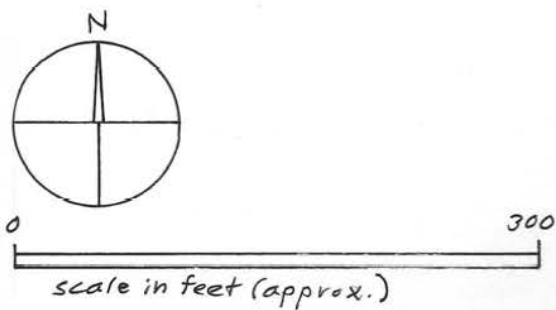
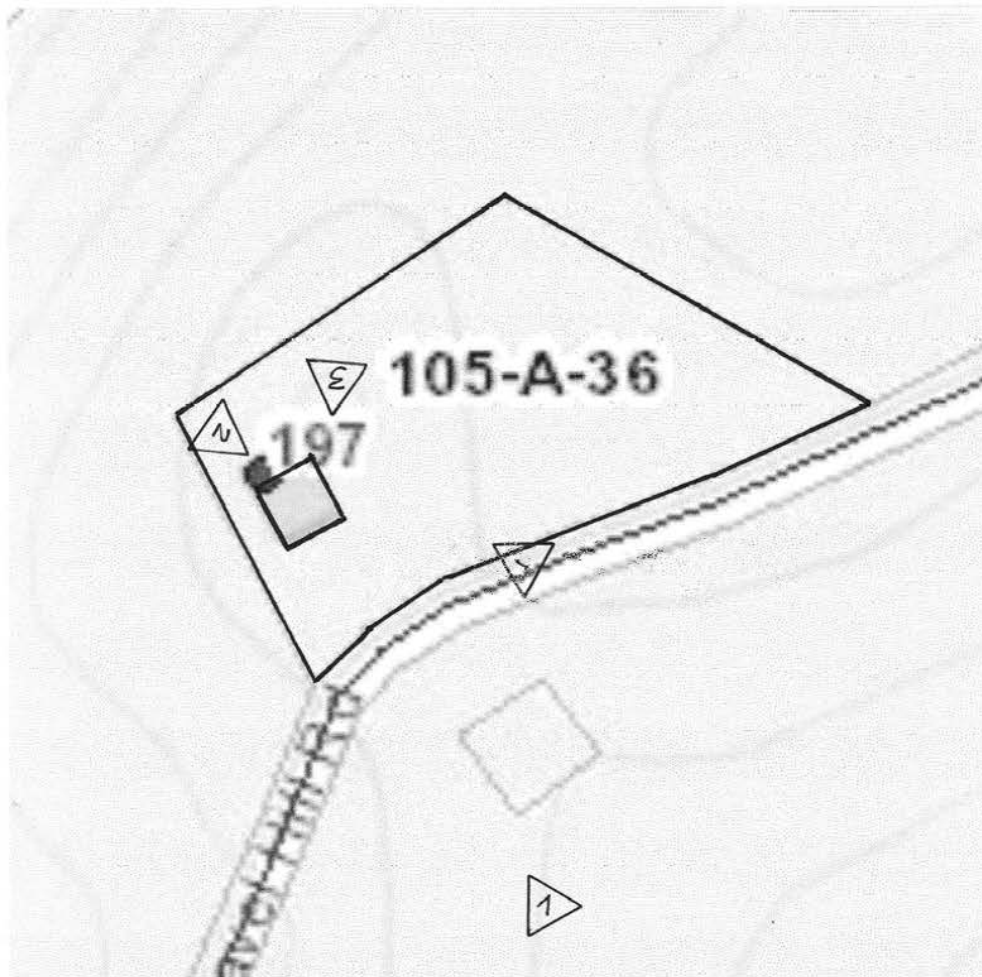


Gravel Hill Christian Church

197 Gravel Hill Road
New Castle, Virginia
DHR ID# 022-5048

National Register of Historic Places Boundary Map, Site Plan & Photo Key

Triangular markers indicate number and direction of view of nomination photos and are keyed to the photo log in the nomination. Scale and placement of building footprint approximate.



Legend

 County Boundaries

AERIAL VIEW

Gravel Hill Christian Church

Craig County, VA

DHR No. 022-5048

 Historic Boundary



Feet

0 50 100 150 200

1:2,257 / 1"=188 Feet



Title:

Date: 10/26/2022

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Gravel Hill Christian Church
Craig County, VA
DHR No. 022-5048
Parcel Map

 Historic Boundary

