Form No. 1(300 (Rev 10-74)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC
St. Matthias Episcopal Church

AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER
East side of Valley Street between Grail Street and S. Beaumont St.

__NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN		CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT
Asheville	__ VICINITY OF	11th

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
North Carolina	37	Buncombe	21

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE	
__DISTRICT	__PUBLIC	X_OCCUPIED	__AGRICULTURE	__MUSEUM
X_BUILDING(S)	X_PRIVATE	__UNOCCUPIED	__COMMERCIAL	__PARK
__STRUCTURE	__BOTH	__WORK IN PROGRESS	__EDUCATIONAL	__PRIVATE RESIDENCE
__SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	__ENTERTAINMENT	X_RELIGIOUS
__OBJECT	__IN PROCESS	X_YES: RESTRICTED	__GOVERNMENT	__SCIENTIFIC
	__BEING CONSIDERED	__YES: UNRESTRICTED	__INDUSTRIAL	__TRANSPORTATION
		__NO	__MILITARY	__OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME
St. Matthias Episcopal Church, c/o Charles Chisolm, Senior Warden

STREET & NUMBER
182 B. Rock Hill Road, Route 9

CITY, TOWN		STATE
Asheville	__ VICINITY OF	N. C. 28803

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Buncombe County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN	STATE
Asheville	N. C.

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

DATE

__FEDERAL __STATE __COUNTY __LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN   STATE

7 DESCRIPTION

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

St. Matthias Episcopal Church stands at the top of a steep hill in an area of south-east-central Asheville known locally as "East End," the oldest black neighborhood of this mountain city. Valley Street below is a busy thoroughfare lined with older commercial establishments and deteriorating frame residences; behind the church are compact rows of simple frame and stuccoed houses facing the streets that climb the western slope of Beaucatcher Mountain. The prominent siting of this small but substantial brick church emphasizes its role as a landmark in this modest black quarter of the city.

The church is of a simple Gothic character. It is built on a cruciform plan with a gable roof nave on an east-west axis intersecting transepts and terminating on the east end in a semi-hexagonal apse. A small gable roof chapel is attached to the southeast corner of the south transept. The brick is laid in one-to-five common bond, with the darker shade of the rows of headers giving a horizontal texture to the surface of the building on every face.

The nave is four bays deep, with the division marked by buttresses. A lancet arch window set on a stone sill and topped by a brick hood-mold is centered on each bay. Similar windows flank the entrance of the three-bay west gable end of the nave. The double-leaf entrance door is set in a pointed arch surround of stone voussoirs. Though the doors are plain modern replacements, the wooden tympanum above them is original. Above the entrance is a large rose window of stained glass in a cinquefoil pattern; centered above this in the peak of the gable is a small pointed-arch louvered ventilator with a wooden cross superimposed across it. A finial in the shape of a cross rises from the peak of the gable.

The south face of the south transept and the west gable entrance of the adjacent chapel are of execution similar to the main entrance, though the perpendicular abutment of the chapel into the corner of the transept causes the truncation of the west corner of the transept and the north corner of the chapel, and an asymmetrical arrangement of windows and door on the ground level of each is the result. A rose window similar to that of the main entrance is set above the entrance to the transept, but it is centered under the peak of the gable and not over the door; on the chapel the circular surround of a blind rose window is set above the door.

The north gable end of the transept is indented just to the left side of the central axis with the brick flue of the building's heating system set in the corner of the indentation; this feature also results in an asymmetrical arrangement of fenestration. On the lower level a lancet arch window is set slightly to the right of the central axis, with a second, identical window to the right of it; above the former, centered directly under the peak of the gable, is a pair of lancet windows, and directly above this is a louvered ventilator.

The semi-hexagonal apse which projects from the rear elevation of the church is pierced with two large double lancet windows. Smaller windows are set in the east walls of the transepts on either side of the apse.

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The church interior is a rich display of dark woodwork fashioned in various Gothic
motifs and has been handsomely maintained. Walls are of white plaster above a
wainscot of narrow vertical sheathing. A heavy timber truss system employing
collar beams and collar braces supports the roof; sawnwork ornamental cusping
is inserted in the triangular interstices between the framing members. The
ceiling is of dark wood sheathing.

The pews are arranged in a center-aisle plan. Pew ends terminate at the top
with a trefoil finial with trefoil incisions set at center; arm rests are
inscribed with a scroll design. Double lancet panels are cut into the sides
of the pews.

The nave is separated from the choir and alter by a screen of narrow turned
posts supporting a wide lintel incised with quatrefoil panels; thin sawn
cusping ornaments the top of the posts. At the central bay of the screen
a wide pointed arch ornamented with thin sawn cusping springs from the posts.
The posts terminate in a broach spire finial.

Pulpit, lectern, altar, and other furnishings, all original to the church, are
decorated with trefoil arch panels, quatrefoil incisions, and other Gothic
elements.

The interior of the small chapel is a scaled-down version of that of the main
church, though the ceiling is now covered with modern acoustical tile.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD		AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW		
__PREHISTORIC	__ARCHEOLOGY PREHISTORIC	__COMMUNITY PLANNING	__LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	X RELIGION
__1400-1499	__ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	__CONSERVATION	__LAW	__SCIENCE
__1500-1599	__AGRICULTURE	__ECONOMICS	__LITERATURE	__SCULPTURE
__1600-1699	X ARCHITECTURE	__EDUCATION	__MILITARY	X SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
__1700-1799	__ART	__ENGINEERING	__MUSIC	__THEATER
X 1800-1899	__COMMERCE	__EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	__PHILOSOPHY	__TRANSPORTATION
__1900-	__COMMUNICATIONS	__INDUSTRY	__POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	X OTHER (SPECIFY)
		__INVENTION		Black History

SPECIFIC DATES   1894-1896   BUILDER/ARCHITECT   Unknown

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

        Sited on the western slope of Beaucatcher Mountain in Asheville's "East End,"
the historic black neighborhood of the town, St. Matthias Episcopal Church stands
as one of the finest churches ever built for a black congregation in North Carolina.
The handsome Gothic-style brick structure with elaborate interior woodwork houses
the oldest congregation of black Episcopalians in the western part of the state.
First known as Trinity Chapel, it was founded for the newly freed slaves of the
area in 1865 by Jarvis Buxton, a noted Episcopal rector who had organized the
first Episcopal congregation for free blacks in North Carolina in Fayetteville in
1832. Trinity Chapel flourished under various leaders and by the end of the nineteenth
century a new church was needed to serve the growing congregation. Bishop Joseph
Blount Cheshire laid the cornerstone of the present structure in February, 1894; the
building was completed in 1896, and the name of the church changed to St. Matthias.
St. Matthias maintained its influence into the twentieth century, and has aided
in the formation of several black Episcopal churches in the Diocese of western
North Carolina.

Criteria Assessment

A.   The church represents the cooperation of the races in the establishment
     of churches to serve the religious needs of freedmen after the Civil War,
     and the strength and success of one such congregation through the nineteenth
     century. It recalls the acceptance of black congregations by the Episcopal
     Church in the postwar era.

C.   As a work of architecture, the Gothic-style structure is among the finest
     built for blacks in the state's history; the sophistication of the interior
     woodwork rivals that of any church of either race or any denomination built
     during the late nineteenth century. The building is a landmark in Asheville's
     black history.

     Because of its architectural significance and its historical importance in
     the development of black congregations in western North Carolina, the property
     meets Exception--relative to Exclusion.

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Saint Matthias Church of Asheville houses the oldest congregation of black Episcopalians in western North Carolina. The congregation was originally a mission of Trinity Parish, the oldest and largest Episcopal Church in the Asheville area, and was known as Trinity Chapel. It was founded in 1865. The original church, a two-story frame building, became overcrowded and was replaced by the present church building in 1896, at which time the name was changed to Saint Matthias.

Much of the impetus for the founding of Trinity Chapel came from Jarvis Buxton, the rector of Trinity Parish in the 1860s, and a noted Episcopal leader. Buxton, while rector of St. John's in Fayetteville in 1832, organized the first Episcopal congregation for freedmen in North Carolina.[1] Buxton was also largely responsible for the establishment of Trinity Parish, the first Episcopal church in Asheville.[2]

After the Civil War, most freedmen in North Carolina became Baptists or Methodists with relatively few becoming Episcopalians.[3] Nonetheless, the attitude of the Episcopa leadership in North Carolina toward the freedmen was relatively progressive. This was the case both immediately before and after the war. Thomas Atkinson, Bishop of the North Carolina Diocese in this period, was a leader in the movement to give blacks equal religious rights. According to noted black historian John Hope Franklin, Atkinson "firmly believed that the Church had a definite responsibility in connection with the religious life of Negroes...(He) made it clear that the same kind of services should be held for Negroes that was being held for whites."[4] Franklin concludes that whatever inadequacies the Episcopal Church had in relation to blacks were a reflection of "the powerful political and economic forces...of the period" rather than of the church.[5]

The same attitude was manifested after the war. Roberta Sue Alexander, a student of the period, says that:

Only the Episcopalian Church escaped the tensions, the problems, and the divisions experienced by the other Protestant churches in North Carolina. The major reason for this was the reunification of the northern and southern branches of the Episcopal Church in 1865....Under the auspices of the Protestant Episcopal Freedmen's Commission, founded in 1865 to provide "religious and secular instruction"for the freedmen, Northerners and Southerners worked together with a minimum of tension or suspicions....Here, largely because of the reunification....and because of the enlightened leadership of Bishop Atkinson, separate black churches were established and black ministers were admitted to the diocesan convention on a basis of equality by the end of the Reconstruction period.[6]

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Much of the early importance of Trinity Chapel was its educational programs
for blacks. In 1872, Jarvis Buxton reported to the convention of the Protestant
Episcopal Church in North Carolina that "The colored Sunday School has been faith-
fully kept up by teachers out of the congregation of Trinity Church, under General
(J. G.)Martin....There is also a free Parochial School for colored children." The
school was in the basement of the church building, with services being held in an
upper room.[7] Buxton was in charge of services to the black community until the
arrival, in 1874, of Samuel Berry. Berry, the first black rector in the area had
transferred from the Diocese of Western New York.[8] By 1879 Berry had increased the
number of communicants in the church from five to thirty-one and could report that
ten Sunday School teachers were responsible for one hundred and twenty-five students.[9]
Berry relinquished his charge in 1885 due to ill heath, and died February 7, 1887,
at the age of 74.[9] Berry was succeeded in 1888 by H. S. McDuffey, who came from
Fayetteville. After several years of neglect, plus the effects of a chapel fire
McDuffey "found the Church in a very bad condition spiritually."[10] After one year
of McDuffey's diligent work, Bishop Lyman was able to report to the 1888 convention
that he was "much gratified to learn that the condition of the work there was so much
more encouraging than for sometime past."[11] In 1890 McDuffey reported 38 communicants
and noted that the "Parochial School is in a flourishing condition."[12] Shortly
thereafter, McDuffey suffered a nervous breakdown, and was replaced in 1892 by J.F.W.
Dunn. Dunn found Trinity Chapel "a promising field but sadly in need of a new church
building." Dunn died July 15, 1892, at the age of 33, and McDuffey, whose health
had improved, returned to Trinity.[13]

By 1894, Trinity had sixty-eight communicants and plans for a new church. On
February 22, 1894, Bishop Joseph Blount Cheshirelaid the cornerstone of the new
church, which was to be "a substantial and imposing structure."[17] The church was
completed in 1896 under its new name of Saint Matthias. On July 7, 1898, it was
consecrated by Bishop Cheshire, with a sermon preached by Reverend J. M. Pollard,
archdeacon for Negro work in North Carolina. The old church building was used as
the chapel. The new church had a seating capacity of 500 and was valued at $11,000.[15]

Reverend McDuffey left Saint Matthias for Long Island in 1902. He was replaced
by Reverend William J. Herritage, who remained until 1910. Under his leadership, the
congregation continued to grow. In 1908, Saint Matthias reported three hundred and
three people attending church, one hundred and fifty-eight of whom were communicants.[16]
A short period of decline set in, with the number of communicants dropping to eighty-
two in 1912. A period of post war expansion increased the number of communicants
from one hundred and sixteen in 1919 to one hundred and fifty-six in 1926. Since
that time, the size of the congregation has gradually decreased. In 1971 Saint

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Matthias possessed one hundred and six communicants.[17] The church has been plagued
in recent years by a shortage of clergy. The rectorship was vacant from 1945 until
1951, and from 1963 until 1965.[18] Rectors have included Reverend James T. Kennedy,
1911 until 1921; Reverend Jacob Jones, 1922 until 1925; Reverend H.A.U. Powell, 1926
until 1931; Reverend John Candler Davis, 1937 until 1940; Reverend John Henry Cole,
1941 until 1944; Reverend Monroe C. Devan, 1952 until 1962; and Reverend Larry
Ansley, 1967 until 1969.[19]

Saint Matthias is important to Asheville in several respects. As a full-fledged
member of the Episcopal Dioceses of both North Carolina and Western North Carolina,
it played an important role in the late nineteenth century development of black
congregations in the denomination. The establishment of its parochial school soon
after the end of the Civil War undoubtedly educated many freedmen who would not
have received education elsewhere. One of its rectors, James Kennedy, became an
Arch-Bishop for Negro church work, and the church was responsible for establishing
a black congregation in Morganton in the 1890s.[20] Saint Matthias Church is a
significant part of Asheville's cultural heritage.

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FOOTNOTES

[1]John Hope Franklin, Negro Episcopalians in Ante Bellum North Carolina (no publisher), 8, hereinafter cited as Franklin, Negro Episcopalians.

[2]Joseph Blount Cheshire(ed.), Sketches of Church History in North Carolina (Wilmington, William L.DeRosset, Jr., 1892), 319.

[3]Frenise Logan, The Negro in North Carolina (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1964), 164-166.

[4]Franklin, Negro Episcopalians, 9-10.

[5]Franklin, Negro Episcopalians, 19.

[6]Roberta Sue Alexander, North Carolina Faces the Freemen (Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Chicago, 1974), 667, 668, 681.

[7]Journal of Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church in The Diocese of North Carolina, 1872, p. 59, hereinafter cited as Episcopal Journal in North Carolina, with appropriate year.

[8]Episcopal Journal in North Carolina, 1875, p. 32. Berry arrived in Asheville in 1867, but did not take over Trinity Chapel until 1874.

[9]Episcoapl Journal in North Carolina, 1879, p. 124; 1887, p. 9.

[10]Episcopal Journal in North Carolina, 1888, pp. 8, 96.

[11]Episcopal Journal in North Carolina, 1888, p. 12.

[12]Episcopal Journal in North Carolina, 1890, p. 99.

[13]Episcopal Journal in North Carolina, 1892, p. 85, 1893, pp. 74, 95.

[14]Episcopal Journal in North Carolina, 1894, pp. 100-101, 143.

[15]Episcopal Journal in North Carolina, 1896, p. 112; Asheville Daily Gazette, July 8, 1898.

[16]Journal of Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the Missionary District of Asheville, 1902, pp. 10, 51, 56; 1908, pp. 91-92, 1910, pp. 71-72, hereinafter cited as Episcopal Journal in Asheville, with appropriate year.

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[17] Episcopal Journal in Asheville, 1912, pp. 71-72, 1919, p. 101; Journal of Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the Diocese of Western North Carolina, 1926, p. 121, 1971, appendix, hereinafter cited as Episcopal Journal in Western North Carolina, with appropriate year. in 1895 the Missionary District of Asheville was formed from the Diocese of North Carolina. In 1922 this District became a separate Diocese.

[18] Episcopal Journal in Western North Carolina, 1945-1951, 1963-1965, appendixes.

[19] Episcopal Journal in Asheville, 1911, p. 9; 1921, p. 9; Episcopal Journal in North Carolina, 1922-1931, 1937-1944, 1952-1962, 1967-1969, appendixes.

[20] Episcopal Journal in North Carolina, 1890, p. 99.

■ MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Alexander, Roberta Sue. <u>North Carolina Faces the Freemen</u>. Unpublished doctoral
     dissertation, University of Chicago, 1974.

Cheshire, Joseph Bount, editor. <u>Sketches of Church History in North Carolina</u>.
     Wilmington; William L. DeRosset, Jr., 1892.

■ GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Asheville quad.
1:24000

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY ____ less than one

UTM REFERENCES

A |1,7| |3|5,9|7,3,0| |3,9,3,9,5,6 0| B |__| |__|__|__|__| |__|__|__|__|
  ZONE EASTING   NORTHING   ZONE EASTING   NORTHING

C |__| |__|__|__|__| |__|__|__|__| D |__| |__|__|__|__| |__|__|__|__|

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

■ FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE Architectural Description by Michael Southern, Survey Specialist
     Statement of Significance by Jim Sumner, Researcher

ORGANIZATION Archeology and Historic Preservation Section   DATE
     N. C. Division of Archives and History   January 1, 1979

STREET & NUMBER   TELEPHONE
     109 E. Jones Street   919-733-6545

CITY OR TOWN   STATE
     Raleigh,   N. C.   27611

■ STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL ___   STATE _X_   LOCAL ___

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I
hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the
criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

TITLE   State Historic Preservation Officer   DATE   January 11, 1979

GPO 892-453

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Franklin, John Hope. Negro Episcopalians in Antebellum North Carolina, (no publisher).

Journal of Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the Diocese of North Carolina, 1872, 1875, 1879, 1888, 1890, 1892, 1894, 1896.

Journal of Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the Diocese of Western North Carolina, 1927, 1945-1951, 1963-1965.

Journal of Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the Missionary District of Asheville, 1802, 1908, 1910.

Logan, Frenise, The Negro in North Carolina. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1964.