

**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

For HCRS use only

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

received

date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Saint Peter's Church

and/or common

2. Location

street & number Church Street at Shaffner not for publication

city, town Brownsville vicinity of congressional district 22

state Pennsylvania code 42 county Fayette code 051

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Congregation of Saint Peter, Diocese of Greensburg

street & number Church Street at Shaffner

city, town Brownsville vicinity of state Pennsylvania

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Fayette County Courthouse

street & number Main Street

city, town Uniontown state Pennsylvania

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Penna. Inventory of Historic Places has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 3/20/80 federal state county local

depository for survey records Pennsylvania Historical & Museum Commission

city, town Harrisburg state Pennsylvania

7. Description

Condition

excellent
 good
 fair

deteriorated
 ruins
 unexposed

Check one

unaltered
 altered

Check one

original site
 moved date _____

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

St. Peter's is a rectangular structure with two to three feet thick native stone walls. The front entrance has a 12 foot stone arched doorway, a nine foot stone arched side entrance with a 9' x 11' covered entryway built of stone and an open timber wooden gable roof.

The main entrance faces the Monongahela River (west) and is dominated by a stone tower 50' high surmounted by a spire 40' high. In the base of this tower is the vestibule some 15x15' square feet. To the left of the vestibule is a unique carved stone spiral staircase leading to the choir loft which is in the west front tower. Located over the choir loft is a large stained glass window, depicting the first Catholic Mass offered in the Monongahela valley on a spot not far from this building. Entering the main body of the church from the vestibule the nave is c. 40x80'; covered with stone paved aisles and oak flooring under the pews. The ceiling is open timbered with a high pitched roof, the ridge of which is 35' above the aisle pavement. The exterior of the roof is covered with copper as are the spire and sacristy roofs. There are five stained glass windows on the south wall and an exit door.

On the wall are three stained glass windows and an entryway into a small wing through a stone archway. Rest rooms are in the wing which was added to the building in 1976. In the southwest corner near the entrance to the wing is the Baptismal font of carved stone and majestic proportion. The front of the church has a high stone arch 20' wide at the base 30' to the apex at the keystone. Behind this arch is the sanctuary where is found the stone altar, stone sedelias in the north wall, carved stone niches for statue in the east wall and a large stained glass window commemorating episodes in the life of Saint Peter, the patron of the Church. Next to the high arch in the southeast corner is a smaller arch of carved stone some 9' high, the entryway to a small alcove where there is a stone altarpiece and a stained glass window honoring Mary the Mother of the Saviour. On the opposite side of the great archway is the hand carved pulpit with a special entry from a small room which can be entered through the wall next to the pulpit. This room is really a small hallway which provides access to the sacristy, the priest vesting area. In this sacristy, a room 12x15' which is really like an annex to the southeast corner of the building, there is a small stone fireplace which provided warmth to the priests who stayed there well over a century ago. There are four well appointed stained glass windows with the crests (coat of arms) of the Catholic Bishops who had ecclesiastical jurisdiction over western Pennsylvania from the landing of the first Catholics. This theme is carried through all the windows of the church with the nave windows depicting the crests of all the Popes and Bishops who have exercised ecclesiastical jurisdiction over Western Pennsylvania. In the west wall on either side of the tower are windows containing crests of the French, British & colonial flags.

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St. Peter's Church, Fayette County

Continuation sheet

Item number 7

Page 2

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In 1976 a small wing was added to the left side of the church to house modern restrooms and a cellar furnace area. The original church does not have a cellar. This wing is constructed of the same stone as used in the original church structure and is matched perfectly. This addition does not distract from the architectural significance or integrity of the building.

(A photo of this addition will be submitted as soon as it is received.)

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/ humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

Specific dates 1843-46

Builder/Architect Mr. Crisp

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Saint Peter's church at Brownsville is one of the finest examples of Gothic Revival ecclesiastical architecture in Pennsylvania. Its simple styling and the adoption of the gothic style make St. Peter's a fine example of an American interpretation of the gothic style of parish church in England.

This building according to legend, was patterned after a village church in Ireland from which many of the parishioners had emigrated. It's old world flavor is evident in details such as the winding stone staircase and the baptismal font. There are no moldings on the exterior; traditional label molds over the arches are simulated by straight flat sections of stone.

The architectural merit of Saint Peter's is acknowledged by the eminent Talbot Hamlin in his excellent work entitled "Greek Revival Architecture in America";

It was in the public building that the Greek Revival found its most perfect Pennsylvania expressions. Here as in so many of the newer lands the rapid rise alike of population and of civic formality made necessary the creation of adequate courthouses as well as the building of many churches. In almost all of these, except the exquisite and extraordinarily accurate Gothic Revival church of Saint Peter's at Brownsville, the Greek Revival reigned supreme. In many ways Saint Peter's Church is one of the most successful of the earlier Gothic Revival churches in America. The simplification of its detail to fit the rather rough stone masonry of which it is built, the handling of the stone itself in window splays and arches, the beauty of the simple interior with its open timber roof, the quiet unostentatious charm of its composition - these all seem so direct and unforced, so absolutely the result of the needs of the building and the materials of which it is made, that the impression it gives is totally lacking in the kind of stage scenery, vaunting unreality that characterized much more ambitious Gothic Churches of the time. Hardly anywhere else have basically Gothic forms been so thoroughly Americanized. St. Peter's is one of the rare instances in which the Gothic has been completely absorbed and re expressed in a native American way, as Greek forms were absorbed and re expressed in the American Greek Revival.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Hamlin, Talbot, *Greek Revival Architecture in America* Oxford University Press, 1944, P. 276-77.
 Stotz, Charles. *The Early Architecture of Western Pennsylvania* Wm. Helburn Company, New York, 1936, P. 216
 Dickson, Harold E. *A Hundred Pennsylvania Buildings*. State College Bald Eagle Press, 1954 p 55

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property .75

Quadrangle name California, Pa.

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UMT References

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4	4	3	0
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6	6	0
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 Zone Easting Northing

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 Zone Easting Northing

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Verbal boundary description and justification

See Continuation Sheet

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	code	county	code

state	code	county	code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Rev Edward F. Higgins & Rev. Louis Cheatham

organization Saint Peter Church

date 11-19-79

street & number 300 Shaffner Ave.

telephone 412-785-7781

city or town Brownville

state Pennsylvania

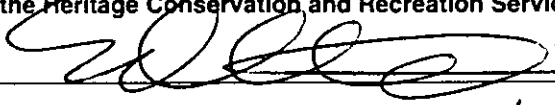
12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state 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 Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

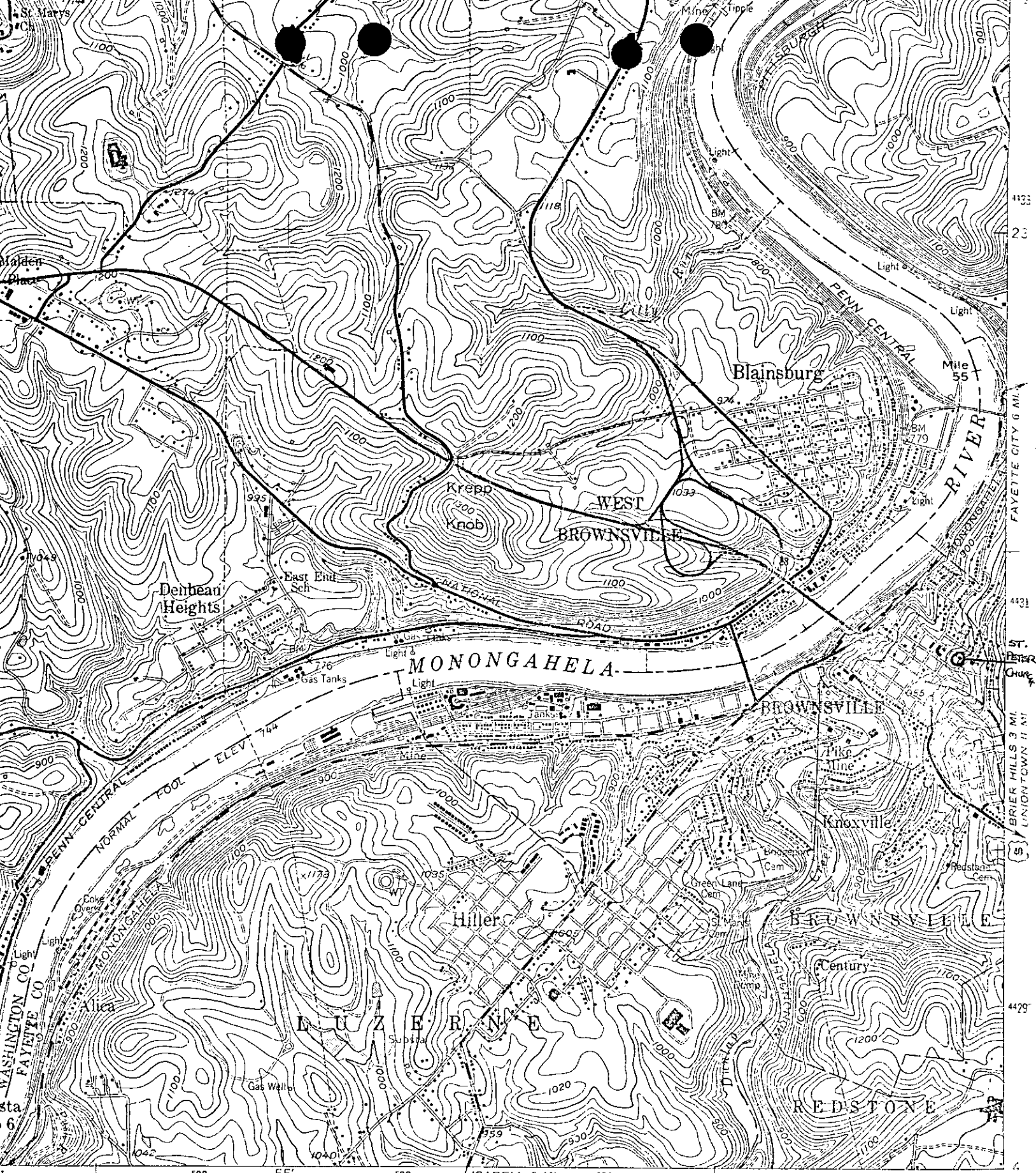
State Historic Preservation Officer signature



ED WEINTRAUB, State Historic
 title Preservation Officer

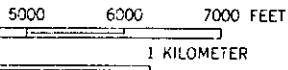
date 10/24/80

For HCERS use only	
I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register	
	date
Keeper of the National Register	
Attest:	date
Chief of Registration	



*St. Peter's Church
Fayette Co.*

1 MILE



ROAD CLASSIFICATION

- Heavy-duty
- Medium-duty
- Light-duty
- Unimproved dirt
- U. S. Route
- State Route

ISABELL 6 MI. 595000m E. 79°52'

N 4430660

E 595780