

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
 NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

 NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
 INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

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

HISTORIC Trinity Lutheran Church

AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER (N. W. corner) 6th and Washington Sts.

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN Reading

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

6

STATE

Pa.

 VICINITY OF
 CODE 42

COUNTY

Berks

CODE

011

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 type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME Trinity Lutheran Church Congregation

STREET & NUMBER 6th and Washington Sts.

CITY, TOWN Reading

VICINITY OF

STATE

Pa.

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Berks County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER 6th and Court Sts.

CITY, TOWN Reading

STATE

Pa.

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE Catalogue of Historic Building Sites and Remains of Pa.

DATE 1949

 FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS Pa. Historical Museum Commission

CITY, TOWN Harrisburg

STATE

Pa.

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

The Trinity Lutheran Church was built in 1792-1794. It was built of red brick in Flemish bond, trimmed with white wood and cut stone. The main building was five bays long and three across, two stories high. In the recessed panel of each side bay was an arched, multipaned window with keystones. Two identical entrances were symmetrically arranged on the first story. Each entrance had a recessed panelled doorway with fanlight window. The doorway was flanked by fluted pilasters and surmounted by a gable with returns. Decorative fretwork lined the gable and entablature. Changes in these doorways have included the installation of glass in place of some of the panels, and the replacement of the original fanlight glass with diamond-pane glass. Above these entranceways, pedimented dentilled gables repeated the gable motif of the doorways. A square bell tower at the west end of the church, with arched and circular windows, completed the original church exterior.

Inside, there were galleries on three sides surrounding the pulpit which was located on the north side of the building. Wooden panelling and rail bannisters comprised the interior woodwork; ceilings and the frieze of the wall were painted in simple but effective classical patterns. Most of the interior furnishings remain intact, except that their arrangement has been changed several times. The altar area, focus of attention, features two pairs of fluted Corinthian columns topped by a segmental arch with returns. The original ceiling and wall painting were covered after 1940.

In 1833, a two hundred foot high steeple was erected on the bell tower. By this addition, the church became for a time the tallest building in the state. The steeple consisted of four sections: a square base, surmounted by a taller, square section, in turn surmounted by a hexagonal section. An octagonal pyramid with weathervane completed the steeple. Each section had Corinthian columns on each corner or face; each had an entablature with dentilled cornice, and each had arched louvered window. In 1892, the steeple was judged unsafe and replaced; care was taken to see that the original features were retained. This steeple was destroyed in a tornado in 1933; in 1963 the steeple was again rebuilt as it originally appeared.

In 1851, the roof of the church was raised to allow for another story. Second story windows were lengthened while first story windows were made rectangular. The corners beside the tower were enclosed to make stairways to the galleries, which were placed on the north, south, and west. A

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CONTINUATION SHEET

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Description:

doorway and gable identical to the originals in the south elevation were included in this addition, to blend with the existing architecture. The columned portico was added to the church's west end in 1900.

Stained glass replaced the small panes of the arched windows in 1892; the glass work was by Tiffany of New York.

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 checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1792

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Trinity Lutheran Church is significant as the first and leading Lutheran church in the Reading area. The building itself is the oldest Lutheran church in the city. It is also a good example of Georgian architecture.

Trinity Church houses the oldest Lutheran congregation, also the oldest congregation of any denomination, in Reading. The congregation was founded in 1751 shortly after the founding of the town itself. Its pastors have included Frederick A. and Henry A. Muhlenberg, son and grandson, respectively of Henry Melchior Muhlenberg. The former pastor was twice speaker of the Continental Congress; the later became U. S. Ambassador to Austria in 1838. The physical and ecclesiastical prominence and elegance of this church are an indication of the strength of Lutheranism in the area and of the German ethnic character of the 18th and 19th century population. A schism between German and English-speaking parishioners occurred in 1860, after which the two language groups separated. The subsequent growth of the congregation reflected prosperous years for the city of Reading.

The present church was also the site of a political convention in 1838, when 1700 members of the Anti-Masonic party met to nominate one Joseph Ritner as their candidate for governor.

The church is also a very good example of Georgian architecture. In particular its rectangular plan, Palladian window in the east gable end and its cornices and doorways, are all typically Georgian. The exterior and interior alterations have not substantially damaged the architectural integrity of the structure. Some later additions, such as the Tiffany glass, are notable in themselves.

An adjoining cemetery contains the graves of Revolutionary War soldiers, among them Dr. Bodo Otto, chief physician at the Valley Forge encampment of 1777-78.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Architectural Write-ups of Reading and Berks County -- manuscript,
Berks County Historical Society.
Albright, Raymond W. Two Centuries of Reading, Pa: 1748-1948.
Historical Society of Berks Co., Reading, 1948.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY less than one(.8)

UTM REFERENCES

A

1	8	4	2	1	3	1	0	4	4	6	5	3	7	0
ZONE				EASTING				NORTHING						

B

ZONE				EASTING				NORTHING						

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

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 Donald Rohrbach, Student Aide
Sally McMurry, Student Aide

ORGANIZATION Pa. Historical Museum Commission DATE 7/30/70

STREET & NUMBER Box 1026, Wm. Penn Museum TELEPHONE (717)787-4363

CITY OR TOWN Harrisburg STATE Pa.

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 National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

TITLE Executive Director
Pa. Historical Museum Commission

DATE 12/2/75

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST:

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
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TRINITY LUTHERAN CHURCH - Berks County

CONTINUATION SHEET

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7. Description:

The stone structure to the north of the 1792 church was constructed in 1891 on the site of a former chapel. The chapel directly abuts the earlier church. Originally done in the Romanesque style with square towers and a large central window, the chapel was completely redone in 1960. At that time the exterior of the chapel was faced with brick. Window and door arrangements were changed and all exterior appointments were done in a style similar to the 1792 structure.

The original cemetery was located immediately to the east and north of the 1792 church. The present chapel was built over a portion of the cemetery while the area to the east (in front of the church) was covered with flagstone. There was no disinterment. However, the exact location of Dr. Otto's grave is no longer known. The cemetery area is included in the area of the nomination.

8. Significance:

Following the split over language in 1860 the German speaking congregation built St. John's German Lutheran Church at Sixth and Walnut. This church is still in existence.

Frederick Augustus Conrad Muhlenberg (1750-1801) was pastor of the Trinity Church from 1770-74. At that time services were conducted in a log church on the same site as the present church.

Henry Augustus Philip Muhlenberg (1782-1844) served as pastor from 1803-1828 in the extant building.

Trinity Lutheran Church,
Berks County, Penna.

ZONE: 18

NORTHING: 4465370

EASTING: 421310

