

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

received

date entered

USE THIS COPY
FOR DUPLICATING

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

1. Name

historic St. Gertrude Roman Catholic Church

and or common

N/A

2. Location

street & number 311 Franklin Ave.

N/A not for publication

city, town Vandergrift

N/A vicinity of

state Pennsylvania

code 42

county Westmoreland

code 129

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 Roman Catholic Diocese of Greensburg 723 E. Pittsburgh St., Greensburg, PA 15601

street & number Rev. Charles Weber, OSB (parish priest) 303 Franklin Ave.

city, town Vandergrift

N/A vicinity of

state PA

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Registry of Deeds, Westmoreland County Courthouse

street & number N. Main St.

city, town Greensburg

state PA 15601

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

Survey
title Westmoreland County Historic/Site has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1979-1981 (Structure #7, Vandergrift Borough) federal state county local

depository for survey records Planning Commission, Westmoreland County Courthouse

city, town Greensburg

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 St. Gertrude Roman Catholic Church is located in a residential neighborhood and is surrounded by private homes that were built in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The church stands on a slight incline and is approximately fifty feet from the street. The building is a bascilia plan, three bays by seven bays. It was designed in the Italian Romanesque Style and has a center pavilion which projects slightly from between twin campanilles. Two rectangular, smooth stone piers with ball finials supported on scrolls flank the entrance steps. The building has a coursed ashlar, rusticated base topped by an uncoursed ashlar with a smooth face. The wall surface above the rusticated stone are striated, alternating wide red brick bands and single courses of smooth stone. On either side of the entrance are three Romanesque semi-columns which carry an entablature with a sculptured frieze. The cornice is broken by a tympanum and archivolt. The tympanum includes a bas relief of Saint Mathew, Mark, Luke and John with representations of the twelve apostles in the archivolt. Above the entrance arch is a thirteen light rose window with classically designed tracery. The rose window was designed by Deprato Statuary Company of River Forest, New York. All other windows in the church are round headed with stained glass and are Romanesque in style. The gable end of the church has a corbelled brick cornice with blind arcading and thirteen tile insets. The tiles were made by Italian artisans. The upper stage of the campanilles has arcaded openings with pairs of Romanesque columns similar to the semi-columns which flank the entrance. The campanilles have low, pyramidal roofs of standing-seam metal. The central pavilion has a red tile, gable roof. The nave in St. Gertrude's Church is bascilia in plan and both the aisles and the nave are vaulted. The nave is separated from the one story side aisles by five bay arcades carried on Romanesque style columns. The columns become increasingly ornate as they approach the altar. The archivolt of the arcade are red brick. Pendant sconces hang above the middle three arches on either side of the nave. Sculptured relief panels delineate the stations of the cross along the aisle exteriors. The stained glass windows throughout the aisles depict the life of Christ.

On either side of the church building are structures that are associated with the church, but are not worthy of listing on the National Register. North of the church is a rectory which was built in 1913, but has undergone significant alterations. South of the church building is a convent and a school building. Both were built in the mid-1930's. These three buildings reflect neither the architectural style nor do they possess the same integrity as the St. Gertrude's church building.

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> social |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799 | <input type="checkbox"/> art | <input type="checkbox"/> engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> music | <input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899 | <input type="checkbox"/> commerce | <input type="checkbox"/> exploration settlement | <input type="checkbox"/> philosophy | <input type="checkbox"/> theater |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900- | <input type="checkbox"/> communications | <input type="checkbox"/> industry | <input type="checkbox"/> politics government | <input type="checkbox"/> transportation |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> invention | | <input type="checkbox"/> other (specify) |

Specific dates Erected 1911 **Builder Architect** John T. Comes

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

During the late nineteenth century small steel towns began to dot the western Pennsylvania landscape. Often these towns were little more than a mill surrounded by workers' housing and a few churches. In many respects Vandergrift was like dozens of other steel towns. However, because of a desire to attract workers and home buyers, the Vandergrift Land and Improvement Company assisted the establishment of the first denominational churches in the town. As a result, Vandergrift became known for the splendor of its churches. Perhaps the most outstanding of the town was the St. Gertrude Roman Catholic Church. The church is the only example of Italian Romanesque architecture in Westmoreland County and one of the best examples in western Pennsylvania. The church was also an important community integrating force in the early history of Vandergrift.

The St. Gertrude Church was built in 1911 by the Dusquesne Construction Company on land purchased by Arch Abbott Boniface Wimmer, the founder of St. Vincent's College and Seminary. The church is a basilica plan and has a central pavilion that slightly projects from twin campanilles. The entrance has three Romanesque semi-columns, a sculptured frieze, and a cornice which is broken by a sculptured tympanum. Above the entrance arch is a thirteen light rose window with a classically designed tracery. The campanilles have arcaded openings with pairs of Romanesque columns similar to the semi-columns that flank the entrance. Since its construction, St. Gertrude's has been considered a visual focal point in Vandergrift.

John T. Comes (1873-1922) was the architect for St. Gertrude's. At the time that the church was designed, Comes worked for the Pittsburgh architectural firm of Ruton and Russell. Recognized as a specialist in the design of ecclesiastical buildings, especially Roman Catholic churches, Comes was the architect for numerous churches in the Pittsburgh area during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Along with the Church of St. Agnes, in Pittsburgh, St. Paul's in Butler, and St. Mary's in McKeesport, St. Gertrude's is considered one of Comes finest works.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Beyond the Curtain, Rev. Fr. Aemilian Schlimm, OSB, Vandergrift, PA
The First 75 Years, A History of Vandergrift, John C. Owens, et. als., Vandergrift, PA 1970
The News Citizen, Vandergrift, PA Jan. 27, 1969
Deed Book vol. 184, p. 177; vol. 193 p. 490; vol. 265, pp. 176-178; vol. 556 pp. 174-178

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property 0.37 acre

Quadrangle name Vandergrift

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UTM References

A

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|------|---|---|---------|---|---|---|---|---|----------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 7 | 6 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 4 | 4 | 9 | 5 | 4 | 4 | 1 | 0 |
| Zone | | | Easting | | | | | | Northing | | | | | | | |

B

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|------|--|--|---------|--|--|--|--|--|----------|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Zone | | | Easting | | | | | | Northing | | | | | | | |

C

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|------|--|--|---------|--|--|--|--|--|----------|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Zone | | | Easting | | | | | | Northing | | | | | | | |

D

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|------|--|--|---------|--|--|--|--|--|----------|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Zone | | | Easting | | | | | | Northing | | | | | | | |

E

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|------|--|--|---------|--|--|--|--|--|----------|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Zone | | | Easting | | | | | | Northing | | | | | | | |

F

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|------|--|--|---------|--|--|--|--|--|----------|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Zone | | | Easting | | | | | | Northing | | | | | | | |

G

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|------|--|--|---------|--|--|--|--|--|----------|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Zone | | | Easting | | | | | | Northing | | | | | | | |

H

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|------|--|--|---------|--|--|--|--|--|----------|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Zone | | | Easting | | | | | | Northing | | | | | | | |

Verbal boundary description and justification From utility pole #309 on Franklin Ave. and following right-hand side of cement walk beside church, line runs 252 feet SW to cyclone fence at top of bluff at rear of church property; thence follows bluff-top and fence and heavy chain 62 feet NW to a point even with NW side of cement walk at other side of church; from this point

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

state N/A code N/A county N/A code N/A

state N/A code N/A county N/A code N/A

11. Form Prepared By

name title Helene Smith/George Swethnam

organization N/A

date March 7, 1982

street & number Box 104-A, R.D. 3

telephone (412) 832-7767

city or town Greensburg

state PA 15601

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 Larry E. Tise, State Historic Preservation Officer date

For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

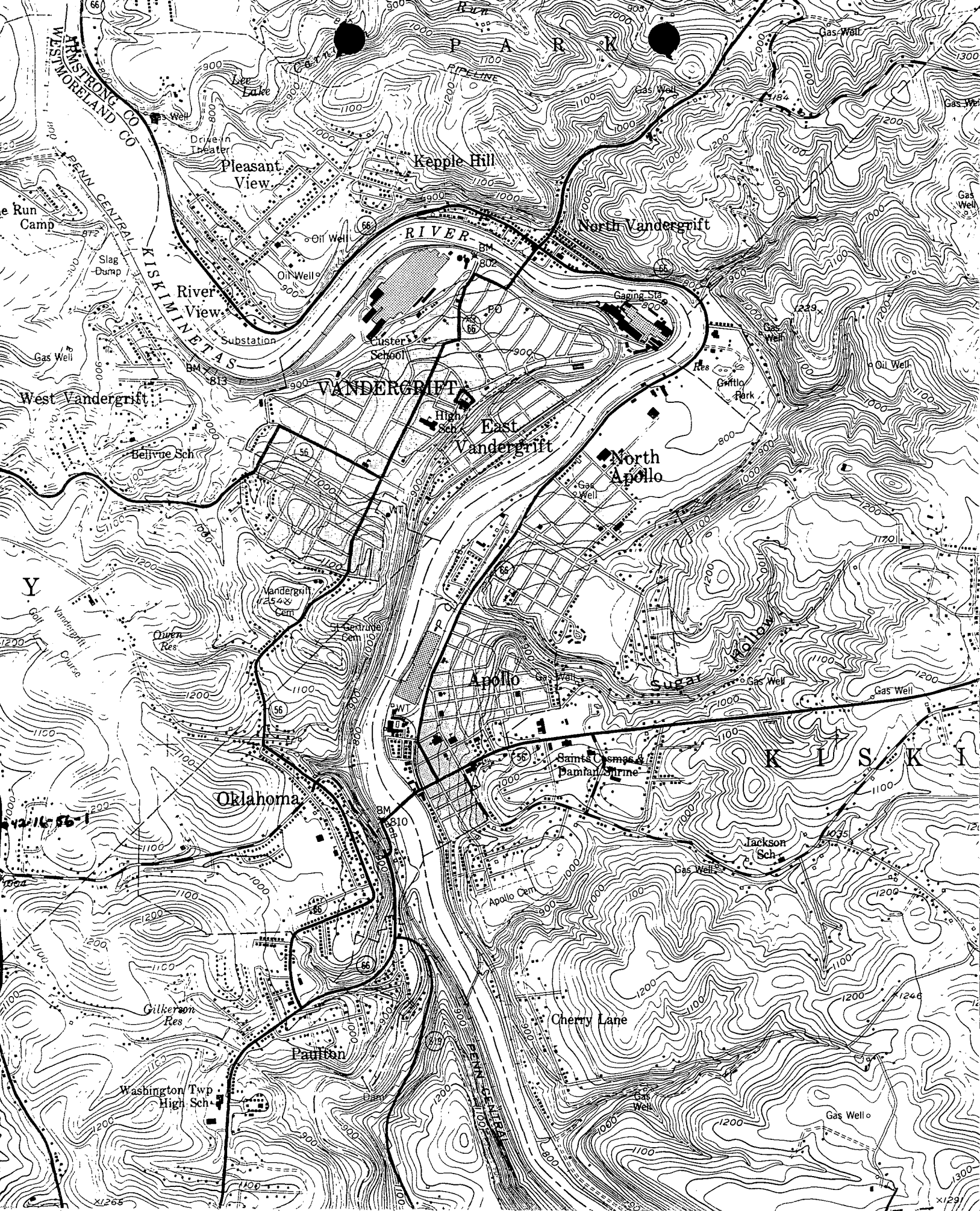
date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration



USGS Map Vandergrift, Pa. SE/4 Freeport 15' Quadrangle N 4030-W 7930/7.5
1963/photos revised 1969