

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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 *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an 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. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name St. Nicholas Byzantine Catholic Church

other names/site number St. Nicholas Greek Catholic Church

2. Location

street & number 504 South Liberty Street N/A not for publication

city or town Perryopolis N/A vicinity

state Pennsylvania code PA county Fayette code 051 zip code 15473

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this 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 meets does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Dr. B. Glass, Exec. Dir. 9/11/97
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

PA Historical and Museum Commission
State of Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

entered in the National Register.
 See continuation sheet.

determined eligible for the National Register
 See continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the National Register.

removed from the National Register.

other. (explain:)

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

Name of Property

County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)

Category of Property (Check only one box)

Number of Resources within Property (Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

- X private
public-local
public-State
public-Federal

- building(s)
district
site
structure
object

Table with 2 columns: Contributing, Noncontributing. Rows for buildings, sites, structures, objects, Total.

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

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Religion: religious structure

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Religion: religious structure

Landscape/street furniture/object

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

other: Byzantine Revival

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Brick
walls Brick
roof asphalt
other roof: stainless steel

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

Name of Property

County and State

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.)

- XX 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.
XX 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.)

Property is:

- XX 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 of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Ethnic Heritage--European

Architecture

Period of Significance

1912-1947

Significant Dates

1912

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Unknown

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

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 #

Primary location of additional data:

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

Name of repository:

Name of Property

County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property less than one

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 17 606380 4437400
Zone Easting Northing
2

3
Zone Easting Northing
4

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Clinton E. Piper, Preservation Consultant

organization for Terry Necciai & John Axtell date June 1997

street & number RD #4, Box 89A telephone 412.537.2738

city or town Latrobe state PA zip code 15650

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A Sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional Items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name St. Nicholas Byzantine Church

street & number RD #1, Box 887 telephone 412.736.4344

city or town Perryopolis state PA zip code 15473

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. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 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 Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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*Saint Nicholas Byzantine Catholic Church
Fayette County, Pennsylvania*

Section Number 7 Page 1

Saint Nicholas Catholic Byzantine Church stands on a 80'-0" x 92'-0" level lot at the southern edge of Perryopolis Borough, Fayette County, Pennsylvania. The church is a tall yellow brick 30'-0" x 60'-0" structure, its gabled roof punctuated with four onion domes. The cruciform plan terminates at the rear with a semi-octagonal apse; the sanctuary is decorated with numerous murals and icons. Connected to the church, to the south, is a two-story, roughly 30'-0" x 15'-0," non-contributing rectory, whose size and materials do not affect the integrity of the church. In front of the rectory is a 5'-0" square circa 1970 non-contributing granite representation of the Crucifixion. It was erected to commemorate the beginning of church construction in 1912 and its completion in 1918. The church was built in the Byzantine style, following the typical form of early twentieth-century Byzantine Catholic Churches throughout Western Pennsylvania.

St. Nicholas Church was built in several phases. The basement was built first, in 1912 and the sanctuary was built after the end of World War I. (*Photo =4*) In 1965-66, the rectory was built to the side. The interior of the sanctuary was finished in stages, as well. A chandelier was brought from Czechoslovakia in the 1920s for the sanctuary. An unknown priest in the 1920s painted the ceiling murals in a Latin-influenced style. In the same period, confessionals were brought from a Roman Catholic church nearby, however confessionals are not part of the Byzantine Catholic Church, and these may be removed at some future point. In the 1960s, a striking icon of the Resurrection was painted in the ceiling of the apse, by noted Hungarian iconographer Stephen Juharos. The large icon in the basement dining room was painted by noted Rusin artist Mila Mina, mother of the present priest, in the 1970s.

The facade of the church is composed of three onion-domed towers, the center being the tallest, connected by narrow wall segments which are curvilinear at the top, forming ogival-arched parapets just above the roof line. The onion domes were clad in circa 1960 with stainless steel. The domes are topped with Orthodox crosses. The center tower has a belfry with louvered, round-arched openings in all four sides and a four-sided lantern (between the onion-dome and cross) which is lit at night. There is a fourth onion dome at the peak of the rear gable end which is above the peak of the semi-conical roof of the apse. (*Photos =1- =3*)

The windows alternate between rectangular openings and round arches. The rectangular openings have brown stone lintels, and the round-arched openings have brown stones at the spring points and at the keystone location. The remaining portions of the arches are composed of three

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courses of bricks in the header position. At the base of the main floor level is a brown stone belt course. Below the belt course, the full basement is exposed on all sides, with rectangular openings in-filled with glass block.

Steps on the facade lead to the main entry which is sheltered by a segmentally-arched wooden canopy on brackets. Within this composition, the front door itself has been replaced with smoked-glass in an anodized aluminum frame. The sanctuary is accessible from the street by way of a small paneled narthex. Above the narthex is the choir loft.

Inside, the walls of the sanctuary are largely covered with icons and murals. The icons and murals are derived from several different generations of activity in the church. Some reflect more Latin influence, while others reflect Orthodox traditions. The ceiling of the nave was painted in Latin motifs in the 1920s while the ceiling of the apse contains an Orthodox style mural of the resurrection painted in the 1960s. The side walls of the sanctuary contain small paintings depicting the "Feasts of Our Lord" and the "Hidden Mysteries." The painted wood altar furnishings include a large Tabernacle in the shape of a church. Over the center of the sanctuary is a large crystal chandelier made in Czechoslovakia and installed in the 1920s. (*Photo #5*)

The basement of the church contains a dining area and a kitchen. In the dining area is a small stage, in the back of which hangs a large icon. The kitchen was relocated from its original location in the front of the church to the rear under the chancel in the 1970s.

The east end of the sanctuary is connected by a ten foot long frame breezeway to the second story level of a very plain, two story, yellow brick rectory erected south of the church in 1965-66. The rectory is a three bay, low-pitched, gable-roofed house which contains the priest's living quarters and office. In the basement are two classrooms. The 30'-0" x 15'-0" building is non-contributing.

The church has had only minor changes since it was constructed, including the addition of the rectory. Minor alterations can be easily divided into two categories. The first category includes those modernizations which represent changes to the church's architectural features, such as the glass block in the basement windows, the replacement of the original front doors with smoked glass and aluminum frames, and the relocation of the kitchen. Although some of these changes

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have had an impact on the overall appearance and integrity of the building, in general they are relatively minor. The second category is that of evolutionary changes. These changes are due to the gradual construction of the building, and the perpetuation of Rusin ecclesiastical traditions. They include the addition of icons and murals to the inside walls and re-cladding of the onion domes with stainless steel in circa 1960. As the congregation has grown in financial strength, these elements that the church had previously been unable to afford, have been added. To a great extent the building retains an authentic sense of design, workmanship, feeling and association since it remains a living focal point of Rusin traditions.

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*Saint Nicholas Byzantine Catholic Church
Fayette County, Pennsylvania*

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St. Nicholas Byzantine Catholic Church is significant under Criterion A, for the ethnic heritage of its European congregation and as one of six Byzantine Catholic Churches founded in Fayette County by Rusin immigrants, representative of a larger group which settled throughout southwestern Pennsylvania. Built between 1912 and 1920, the same period that most of Western Pennsylvania's Rusin churches were constructed, this church stands out for its distinctive and well-preserved Byzantine architecture and is significant under Criterion C, for Architecture this reason. The distinctive onion domes and other architectural embellishments of the church are representative of the turn of the century European-influenced architecture erected in the area. The church's significance begins with its construction in 1912 and ends in 1947.

Summary History

Perryopolis was laid in 1814 by Samuel Shreve, Dr. Thomas Hersey, Nathan Hersey, and Samuel Burns on land originally claimed owned by George Washington consisting of 1,641 acres. The projected town which featured a central diamond with a series of eight radial streets, was oriented toward new residents and industries. Business and dwelling lots were offered for sale, and dozens of new families moved into the area to settle the new town. Several efforts to further industrialize the area materialized within a year or two of the town plan. They included a glass factory, financed by stock certificates sold to local farmers, many of whom later lost their farmers when the factory failed, and the Youghioghney Bank, which capitalized in the same manner.

The town plan was much grander than the eventual reality: the layout was one suited for a much larger, perhaps denser town, with lots at the center initially reserved for facilities characteristic of populous cities, such as an orphanage. Perryopolis never grew into an urban community, and even as a sizable twentieth century small town, many of the lots toward the center of the town remained largely underdeveloped.

Although Perryopolis has served as the market center for Perry Township and surrounding agricultural districts since the town's founding in 1814, the coming of major coal mining and coke making operations to the area after 1890 led to a wave of construction around the central Washington Diamond to house new and expanded retail stores, restaurants and offices. The increase in population and prosperity which the coal and coke boom brought to Perryopolis Borough led to the opening of new businesses and to the founding of new churches. The churches and some of the businesses were the products of Eastern European immigrants whom the

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*Saint Nicholas Byzantine Catholic Church
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mines and ovens attracted to the Perryopolis area. Businesses were started by long-time area residents. In 1950, Perryopolis Borough was incorporated as a separate municipality. Today, Perryopolis is a center for small industry and a bedroom town for larger towns in the Monongahela valley and Pittsburgh. The central business district retains sufficient vitality to support a variety of retail businesses around the central Washington Diamond, despite competition from a commercial strip along the Route 51 bypass.

Church History

The Rusins came to the Perryopolis region from areas in the Carpathian Mountains where ancient Ukrainian and Russian cultural traditions survived because of hundreds years of isolation. Although these areas eventually were part of predominantly Roman Catholic countries such as Poland and Czechoslovakia, remnants of the ancient Orthodox liturgy and dialects of the Ukrainian language were still present. During the Counter Reformation, Catholics in the Carpathian Mountains appealed to the Vatican for a special liturgy which would allow them to retain religious traditions of Orthodox origin, including a married priesthood, while remaining in harmony with the Roman Catholic government. This was granted in the creation of the Uniat Church, an Eastern Rite of Catholicism, in 1646.

Immigrants to America from this region initially attended Roman Catholic Churches, until resources were raised to bring priests from their native region and create Uniat Churches here. The American Roman Catholic hierarchy was not receptive to the creation of Uniat (or Byzantine Rite) Catholic Churches, partly because of the married priesthood. However, by 1891, St. Stephens Byzantine Rite Church had been founded in the nearby Frick Company coal community of Leisenring, Fayette County and two Uniat churches had been organized in the Pittsburgh area. Due to continuing tensions with the local Roman Catholic hierarchy over doctrinal issues, many Byzantine Rite churches in America were initially served by Russian Orthodox priests, St. Nicholas among them. In the years following the First World War a Byzantine Catholic Diocese was created, linked to the Vatican, but separate from the Roman Catholic hierarchy. About a third of the Rusin congregations became part of this diocese, including St. Nicholas.

The Rusins are an important component of Western Pennsylvania's ethnic mix and their churches are the best single reflection of their heritage. They came as laborers in the mills and mining towns such as those in the Perryopolis area. Often they were the poorest and most

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unassuming (and frequently most misunderstood) group to settle in a given neighborhood. Yet they produced spectacular churches throughout the region, in addition to several fraternal organizations and other institutions. In some ways they helped to bridge Catholic Slavic Groups and Orthodox Slavic groups. According to research by Folklorist Doris Dyen collected during fieldwork of the *Historic Site Survey of the Greater Monongahela Valley*, Western Pennsylvania has one of the largest, if not the largest Rusin community in the United States. Dyen also revealed in her research that the Rusins claim to be the only ethnic group which, numerically, is equally divided between its European homeland and America.

A few miles north of Perryopolis, there was a large group of Rusin miners working in mines operated by the Pittsburgh Coal Company, prior to 1907. They lived in Van Meter, Jacob's Creek, both in Westmoreland County, as well as Perryopolis. They worked at the Darr Mine. On 19 December 1907, an explosion occurred at the Darr Mine killing 239 men. The disaster happened on St. Nicholas Day, one of the most important holidays in the Rusin calendar. About 200 miners had taken the day off to take their families to St. Stephens at Leisenring, the nearest Byzantine Catholic Church, about ten miles southeast of Perryopolis, and they were spared. *The Pittsburgh Dispatch* declared on December 29, in covering the story, that "On account of the religious holiday...the number was cut nearly in half, and these almost 200 men, who were saved by religious devotion, will certainly be more devout than ever after the extent of the mine's horror is fully realized."

According to first-hand research conducted by Architect/Preservationist Terry A. Necciai, for the *Historic Site Survey of the Greater Monongahela Valley*, that particular month was the worst month in American mining history in terms of deaths due to disastrous explosions. The Mongah Mine in West Virginia exploded, killing 364, and several other mines near Darr Mine had similar, though smaller disasters. Had these men been at work, Darr would have been the single worst disaster in American mining history. Consequently, according to local folklore, many new congregations were formed shortly after the Darr Disaster, and a number of them were named in honor of St. Nicholas, this church being one of them.

St. Nicholas Byzantine Catholic Church is an excellent example of the Byzantine architecture built in the region by Rusin immigrants. Most of these churches are yellow brick, raised on an exposed foundation, cruciform in plan, with an apse at one end and three onion-domed towers at the

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*Saint Nicholas Byzantine Catholic Church
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other end. Most were built circa 1915. Of all the other Byzantine-style Rusin churches in the region, St. Nicholas is most similar in style to Holy Resurrection, at West Brownsville, Fayette County. These two churches are almost identical. It is much more sophisticated than nearby Jacobs Creek Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Church, which is a much smaller, more recent structure. The present St. Stephens church at Leisenring is a simple frame building from 1967 with subsequent additions including three onion domes built in 1990. St. Nicholas is much more "Byzantine" in style than the larger Holy Trinity at New Salem, Fayette County, which has pointed-arched-windows and other Latinized features. St. Nicholas is more characteristic of Byzantine Churches in the region than St. Michael's of Donora, Washington County, which has an unusual color of brick and level of detail, characterized by other buildings by C.C. Compton, architect of the Donora church. Among these, St. Nicholas is a well-preserved example of this style building as typically executed in this region.

St. Nicholas Byzantine Catholic Church embodies both ethnic and architectural traditions critical to the identity and perpetuation of Rusin-American culture. The onion domes and Byzantine style design are the most obvious. The artwork in the sanctuary has importance which transcends its architectural or artistic qualities. The icons themselves bear special ecclesiastical significance in Orthodox theology, and also represent an art form which continues to live and evolve. The embellishment of the sanctuary gradually over several generations represents the growth and struggle of the Rusin identity in this region, evolving from poverty and plainness to a celebration of traditional art. The struggle between the Orthodox and Latin roots of Rusin Christianity is reflected in the use of Latinized elements, such as Italian-style paintings, and a Roman-Catholic-influenced altar and confessionals, which in the current state of evolution, are considered much less appropriate than before, and may eventually be removed. The basement-level dining room/kitchen, and the onion domes are still more evidence of the gradual evolution and life of Rusin traditions in this church. The dining room and kitchen were given emphasis and easy access in the construction of the church, and continue to be focal points of the perpetuation of Rusin-American food ways.

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*Saint Nicholas Byzantine Catholic Church
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MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

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- St. Nicholas Byzantine Catholic Church Diamond Jubilee Yearbook*. Perryopolis, 1987.
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*Saint Nicholas Byzantine Catholic Church
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Page 1

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The boundaries of the nominated property roughly measure 80' by 92' and represent a 7,360 square foot portion of Tax Parcel #28-09-238 at the Fayette County Court House, Uniontown, Pennsylvania.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The boundaries include St. Nicholas Byzantine Catholic Church and rectory and the immediate grounds.

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SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD

NRIS Reference Number: 97001247 Date Listed: 11/7/97

St. Nicholas Byzantine Catholic Church Fayette PA
Property Name: County: State:

Multiple Name

This property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places in accordance with the attached nomination documentation subject to the following exceptions, exclusions, or amendments, notwithstanding the National Park Service certification included in the nomination documentation.

Patrick Andrews
Signature of the Keeper

12/11/97
Date of Action

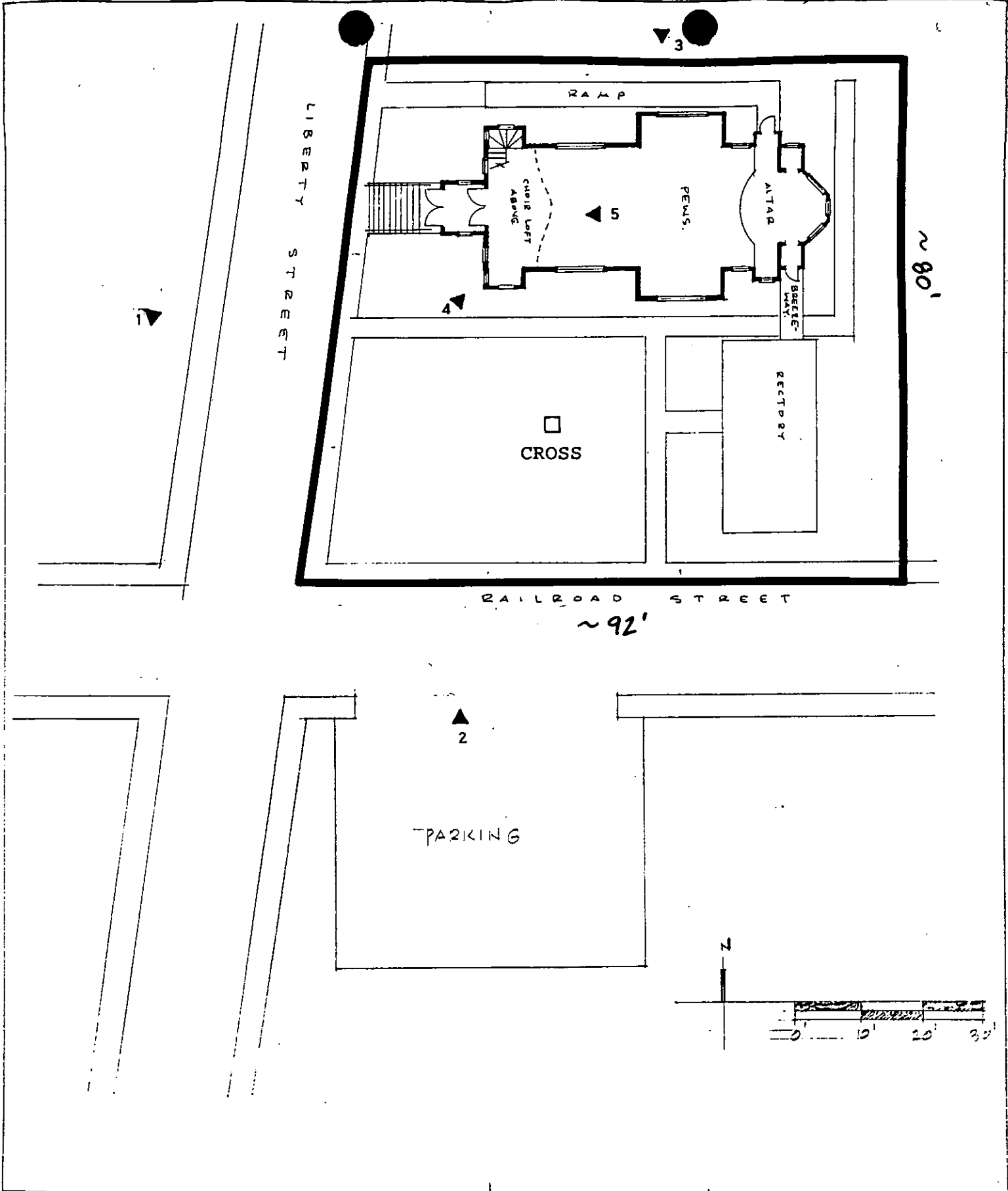
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Amended Items in Nomination:

This SLR makes a technical correction to the nomination form. In section 5 of the form (Category of Property) no category was selected. This SLR amends the form to note that the nominated property is a building.

DISTRIBUTION:

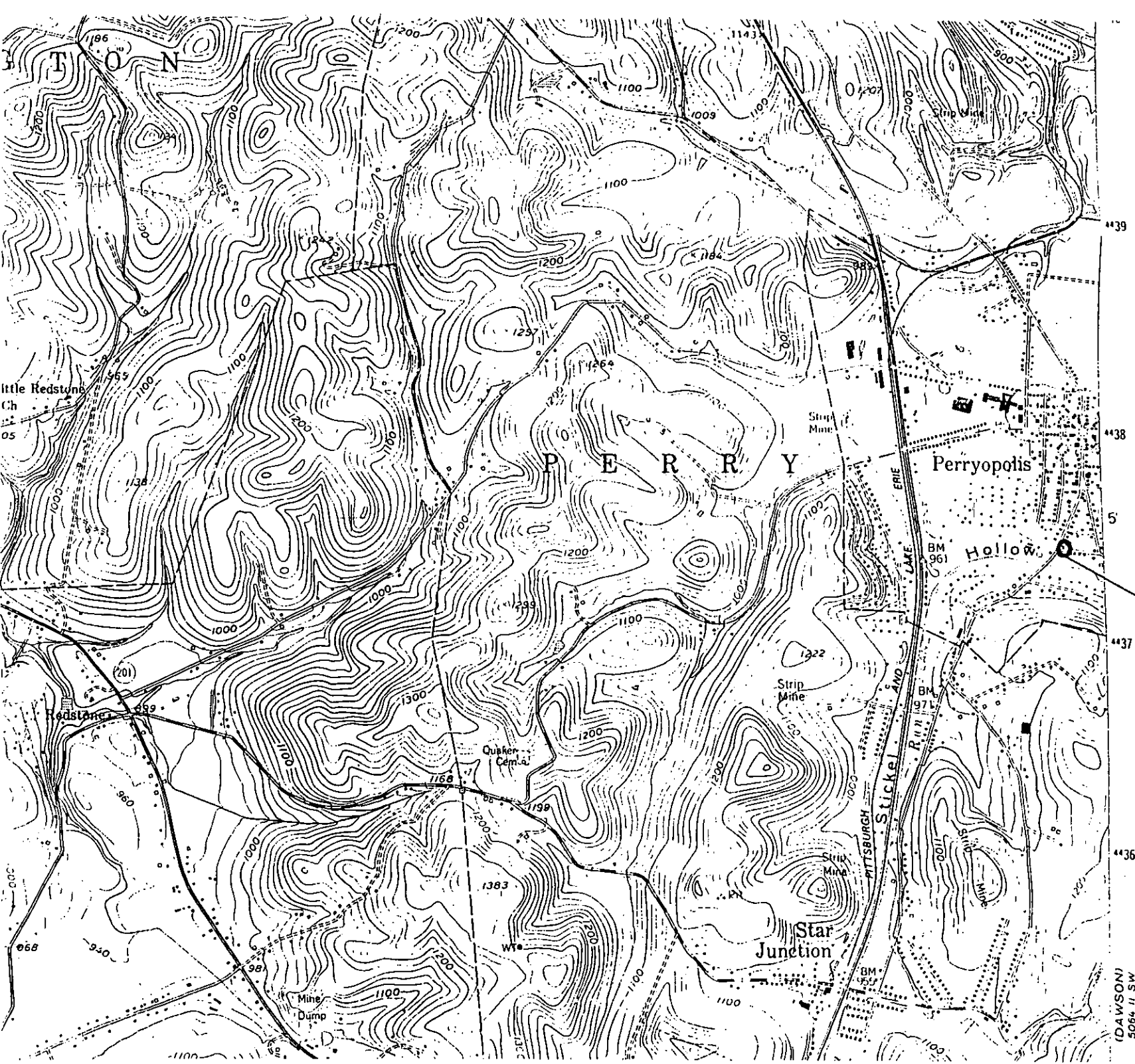
- National Register property file
- Nominating Authority (without nomination attachment)



TITLE: St. Nicholas Byzantine Church

TERRY A NECCIAI
 HISTORIC PRESERVATION CONSULTING

DATE: December 1996
 SCALE: see visual
 DRAWN BY: SDC



St. Nicholas
Brenton Catholic Church
Fayette County, PA
Fayette City Quad
7.11E 17

1. 606380
4437400

(DAWSON)
5064 II SW