Form 10-300
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Typed all entries - complete applicable sections)

1. NAME

COMMON: St. Peter's Roman Catholic Church
AND/OR HISTORIC:

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER: Corner of Church Street and Jefferson Rock Trail

CITY OR TOWN: Harpers Ferry
STATE: West Virginia

3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)
- Public Architecture
- Private Architecture
- Both

STATUS
- Occupied
- Unoccupied
- In Process
- Being Considered

ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
- Yes
- Restricted
- No

PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)
- Agricultural
- Government
- Park
- Transportation
- Commercial
- Industrial
- Other (Specify)
- Educational
- Religious
- Military
- Park
- Other (Specify)
- Entertainement
- Museum
- Scientific

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME: Bishop John R. Russell
STREET AND NUMBER: 800 Cathedral Street
CITY OR TOWN: Wheeling
STATE: West Virginia

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC:
Jefferson County Courthouse

CITY OR TOWN: Harpers Ferry
STATE: West Virginia

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY:
History of the St. Peter's Roman Catholic Church 1830-1868
DATE OF SURVEY: October 23, 1958
DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:
Harpers Ferry National Historical Park

CITY OR TOWN: Harpers Ferry
STATE: West Virginia

* See letter of July 2, 1976, from Bishop Russell in the folder.
The church was 39 feet by 75 feet. It had four large arched windows on either side with an additional window in the one story rear vestry room. There were also five windows in the front of the church, three arched and two round, together with the door. There was also a steeple at the front of the church.

The interior originally had a high arched ceiling and a beautiful pulpit with the image of the Virgin Mary with the Infant Jesus in her lap.

The church was a one story brick building on a stone foundation with a false front. Four stone steps led up to the door. It was twenty-five feet to the eaves. By 1894, it had a slate roof.

It's exterior was drastically remodeled in 1896, and changed from its earlier pseudo-gothic appearance to the then popular post-Civil War neo-gothic style. In the remodeling, the terrace in front of the edifice was lengthened, bringing the new front of the structure back toward the west. The original structure was brick and the newer wall materials replaced the brick with granite of a greenish cast with window opening trim and coping stones made of red sandstone. The latter materials are not native to the area.

A slate roof dating 1896 was recently replaced with modern composition shingles. A new bell tower and steeple was erected at the southeast corner together with a recessed portico. These replaced the earlier central tower and entrance of the original structure.

An apse at the rear replaced a brick lean-to attached to the 1830 church. Central heat was installed in place of the stoves used earlier.

A two story stone rectory was built behind the church in 1853. It was pargeted and scored to resemble coursed ashlar. A cupola was centered on the roof's ridge line and has since been removed. A porch graced this structure, but it too has been removed.
Aside from the beauty of the structure, St. Peter’s Roman Catholic Church is historically significant because it was the third church erected at Harpers Ferry and was the only one not located on government land.

The original tract of land on which the church stands was owned by Harpers Ferry’s founder, Robert Harper. In his will, dated September 1782, he gave specific instructions to have a church built on the site he designated. Nothing was done until 1831 when the Wagner family donated the land to the Roman Catholic Church.

It was finished and consecrated by 1833 and has served the Roman Catholic faith from that day to this. A list of the pastors who served St. Peter’s Roman Catholic Church from its establishment through the end of the Civil War include the Reverends John B. Gildea, Richard V. Whelan, John O’Brien, Joseph Plunkett, Andrew Talty, and Michael Costello. The Reverend Costello remained at the church to protect it during the Civil War; thus, it was the only church to escape serious destruction or desecration.

According to Bushong’s Historic Jefferson County, Private Luke Quinn was one of the marines killed during John Brown’s raid, and according to a paper done by the Reverend Charles Pfab, the Reverend Costello conducted the funeral of Private Quinn. After the funeral, Quinn was laid to rest in a nearby cemetery. In May 1940, a monument was erected over his grave.

Magri, Joseph, Reverend and Dittmeyer, Walter E., "History of St. Peter's Church, Harpers Ferry, West Virginia." Centenary 1830-1930.

Smith, Philip, "History of the St. Peter's Roman Catholic Church, 1830-1868, Harpers Ferry National Monument." Research report prepared by the Park Historian on Oct. 23, 1958, revised March 11, 1959, research pro. no. HP-22B.

As the designated State Liaison 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. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National ☒ State ☐ Local ☐

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

Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation
St. Peter's Roman Catholic Church, Harper's Ferry, W.Va.