

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 of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

### 1. Name of Property

historic name St. John's Episcopal Church  
other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_

### 2. Location

street & number 315 S. Main Street N/A  not for publication  
city, town Marion N/A  vicinity  
state North Carolina code NC county McDowell code 111 zip code 28752

### 3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	_____	_____ sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	_____	_____ structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	_____	_____ objects
		<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing: \_\_\_\_\_ Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0  
Historic and Architectural Resources in Downtown Marion, North Carolina

### 4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, 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.  See continuation sheet.  
Signature of certifying official William S. Pink Date 2-4-91  
State or Federal agency and bureau \_\_\_\_\_

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.  See continuation sheet.  
Signature of commenting or other official \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau \_\_\_\_\_

### 5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this 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

**6. Function or Use**

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)  
Religion: religious structure

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)  
Religion: religious structure

**7. Description**

Architectural Classification  
(enter categories from instructions)

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

Other: Carpenter Gothic

foundation brick

walls wood

roof asphalt shingle

other shake

tin

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

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Historic and Architectural Resources in Downtown Marion, NC: St. John's  
Section number 7 Page 1 Episcopal Church

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### DESCRIPTION

St. John's Episcopal Church is perhaps one of the finest examples of a Carpenter Gothic church in western North Carolina. The building is a simple rectilinear form which fronts on Main Street, but has its main entrance on the north side facing Spring Street. It is a one story structure with a steeply pitched gable roof on the main sanctuary and a more gently sloping gable roof on the rear additions. Lancet windows, typical of the building style, punctuate the building at regular intervals. The main body of the building was built in 1883 with the entrance into the building through the bell tower on the north side. Originally, the building was rather austere, with a traditional rectilinear door leading into a very plain bell tower. In 1903 a more elaborate bell tower (the one presently in existence) was built in the same location. In 1921 a choir room and sacristy were added to the rear of the building, and in 1949 the sanctuary was extended seventeen feet towards Main Street.

Exterior walls of the church are board and batten. All additions utilize this same material, but the original main body of the structure has hand-hewn battens whereas the additions have machine-made battens. The most significant change to the church certainly was the extension of the sanctuary in 1949, however, without close examination of the battens or the use of documentary photos, it would be difficult to tell that indeed an addition had been made. Careful attention was paid to all exterior detailing, including exact duplication of roof pitch, identical lancet windows, and craftsmanship.

The north facade of the building is by far the most elaborate in detailing typical of the Carpenter Gothic style. The present bell tower, built in 1903, is covered with board and batten siding on the lower portion, but utilizes irregular shingles on the upper portion capped by a steeply pitched roof with flared eaves. Lancet windows punctuate the tower as they do on other portions of the building. When the sanctuary was extended seventeen feet in 1949, the original entrance was moved as well. The main entrance now is at the northwest corner of the building through a small gable-roofed projecting bay and doorway which also utilizes the lancet arch.

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The choir and sacristy rooms added to the northeast and southeast corners of the building are simple, low one story additions which utilize the same board and batten siding, lancet windows, and also have exposed rafter ends within the eaves. The south facade of the building is punctuated by a row of lancet windows, but otherwise is relatively plain and simple as compared to the more elaborate north facade. The front or west facade as well as the rear or east facade are both punctuated by single large stained glass windows which also display the lancet arch.

The inside of the church displays the same quality of craftsmanship and features of the Carpenter Gothic style as does the outside. The original portion is 18' x 54'. Exposed rafters and hand cut beams support a network of triangular knee braces in the tall steeply pitched ceiling. Eight inch wide boards are visible among the rafters. Walls in the original portion of the church are of hand-hewn, narrow beaded boards that run vertically above a chairrail, and run horizontally in the wainscot below. The newer section of the building utilizes matching materials, with the exception being that boards are machine cut and are slightly wider. The original entry door through the bell tower is clearly evident inside the church, and, in fact, clearly demarcates where the addition begins (adding 17' to the nave). Floors beneath the present carpeting are wide boards. Some of the original furnishings such as the bishop's chair on the altar, remain in the church. It is built of the same hand-hewn wood, and is stained a dark mahogany like the rest of the original woodwork in the building. The present oak pews and lighting were added when additions were made to the church in the 1940s. Stained glass in the front of the church (facing Main Street) was installed in 1978 in memory of Silas Walker Blanton. It is vivid in color, unlike the window at the altar, installed in the 1920s, in memory of Albert and Charlotte Blanton. The earlier window utilizes softer color shadings and is also more traditional in its subject matter than the later window, depicting St. John the Scribe. It was imported from Munich. The 1978 window was designed and crafted by Willet Stained Glass Studios in Philadelphia. Both windows have clear protective coverings on the outside, of a substance known as Laxan polycarbonate. The ikon on the door above the tabernacle was made in Russia, and was given by a former rector of the church, Reverend Albert P. Mack in the 1950s. A woodcarving of the Last Supper, crafted recently by Marion woodcarver Steve Duncan, hangs above the entrance door.

**8. Statement of Significance**

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally     statewide     locally

Applicable National Register Criteria     A     B     C     D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions)     A     B     C     D     E     F     G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Architecture  
Community Planning and Development  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Period of Significance

1883-1937  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Significant Dates

1883  
1903  
1921

Cultural Affiliation

N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Bland, Charles Theodore, builder  
Dellinger, William, builder

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

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### SUMMARY

St. John's Episcopal Church is eligible for listing in the National Register under Criteria A and C as being reflective of community growth, both within Marion and in the church itself in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, and as being an outstanding example of vernacular Carpenter Gothic architecture and fine local craftsmanship. It was built in 1883, and was crafted primarily by a local carpenter who was also the church's first rector. Significant details of the building include hand-hewn beams, lancet windows, board and batten siding, and beaded board interior walls and wainscot. St. John's is one of the few examples of this style anywhere in western North Carolina, and the oldest surviving church structure in Marion.

### HISTORIC CONTEXT

#### Architecture

St. John's Episcopal Church, built in 1883-1884, is significant for being one of the most intact examples of a vernacular Carpenter Gothic church in western North Carolina which has retained many of the elements of its original style while at the same time incorporating a later, more elaborate Queen Anne tower. While there are certainly others such as the Payne Chapel in the Sandy Mush community of Buncombe County, or the Gudger Chapel in the Leicester area of Buncombe County, this particular building is important for its more stylish use of form, materials, and craftsmanship. The building is written up in a February, 1970 article in the North Carolina Architect entitled "Architecture in North Carolina 1700-1900", in which the author, Lawrence Wodehouse, notes that St. John's is perhaps "the most ornate of these essentially simple buildings" patterned after Upjohn's designs. It is likely, although not fully documented, that the original building design, before the present tower was added, was based upon a plan book, Upjohn's Rural Architecture by Richard Upjohn, designer of Trinity Church in New York, and the first president of the American Institute of Architects. The church's first rector, Reverend Charles Theodore Bland, was a skilled carpenter and was responsible for most of the work on the building. He worked closely with another local carpenter, William Dellinger, in executing many of the building's outstanding details. Despite the reconstruction of the original Upjohn-inspired tower with the more elaborate Victorian one that remains, the identifying features of the original Carpenter Gothic design survive.

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### Community Planning and Development

St. John's Episcopal Church is also significant in the area of community planning and development due to the fact that it was built during one of Marion's major periods of development which began in 1870 and continued through most of the 1930s. As the town grew in this period, so did the membership of the church and thus the church building itself. A new bell tower and bell were added in 1903, and in 1921 the choir and sacristy rooms were added. In 1949 the nave was extended towards Main Street to enlarge the seating capacity of the sanctuary.

### **HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

St. John's is one of the few buildings that survived the 1894 fire on Main Street. It remains today as the oldest surviving church structure in Marion. Founded in 1881 with five members, membership in the church has grown steadily over the years. For example, in 1916, an average of twenty-two people attended most services, but by 1921 this number had grown to an average of forty-eight individuals. The number of communicants in the church grew from thirty in 1900 to one hundred and seven by 1938.<sup>1</sup> Membership in the church today numbers over seventy.

In 1881, the Tate family, a local Marion family, joined with several others in Marion to organize the church. Reverend Charles Theodore Bland served as the first rector in Marion, along with several other communities he served at the time. As early as 1874, there was an Episcopal church in Old Fort, also in McDowell County, about ten miles west of Marion, known as St. Gabriel's. Reverend Bland had helped to organize and build this church, prior to coming to Marion in 1881. St. Gabriel's remained in existence until 1916 when it was destroyed by a mudslide and flood.<sup>2</sup> It was never rebuilt, and members of this church began to attend services at St. John's, which they still continue to do today.

Before the Marion church was built, services were held "...in the academy, the Court House, and once in a private parlor."<sup>3</sup> On June 13, 1882, the congregation bought a parcel of land for \$25.00 from Allen Baker of Newport, Tennessee to construct a church.<sup>4</sup> It was located only three blocks from the courthouse, on Main Street. Reverend

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Bland raised much of the money to build the church, but dedicated much of his own time in the construction of the building as well. He also built much of the furniture in the building. The cornerstone of the building was laid April 19, 1883.<sup>5</sup> The church was first used on Thanksgiving Day, 1883, but was not fully completed until 1884. Reverend Bland was 63 years old when he began serving Marion in 1881. He died, at the age of 91 in 1909, after having served the church for ten years (1881-1891). The building was consecrated as St. John's Episcopal Church on May 17, 1891.<sup>6</sup> Gerard W. Phelps served from 1892-1895. Reverend C. J. Wingate served the church from 1896-1900, A. DeRossett Meares from 1901-1908, W.B. Magnam from 1910-1912, and Reverend S. B. Lassiter from 1912-1924. In 1896, the church purchased a rectory, "...an old house, later improved, on a lot 325' x 66' extending from Main Street to Garden Street" (not included in the nominated area).<sup>7</sup> The church bell tower was completed in 1903, with the new bell donated by Mrs. C.D. Meares of Wilmington, North Carolina. It was rung for the first time on April 5, 1905, on Palm Sunday.<sup>8</sup> The choir and sacristy rooms were added in 1921, and the stained glass window in memory of Abner and Charlotte Walker Blanton was dedicated in 1924.<sup>9</sup>

Jesse S. Lacaby served as rector from 1924-1937, Norman Kinizie from 1939-1940, D. N. Peeples from 1941-1943, Albert P. Mack from 1944-1956, William L. Russel from 1956-1961, William Edwards from 1960-1961, John Q. Beckwith from 1962-1966, Delmas E. Hare from 1966-1979, Tony Ferguson from 1980-1985, and Reverend Lawrence B. Hardy, 1985 to the present. In 1956, a parish house was constructed south of the church building on a separate parcel of land.

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### FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Church records, St. John's Episcopal Church,  
1881-1970.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>"St. John's Episcopal Church," The McDowell News,  
12th of August, 1981.

<sup>4</sup>McDowell County Deed Book 11, Page 518

<sup>5</sup>"St. John's Episcopal Church"

<sup>6</sup>"Episcopal Church Built in 1881," McDowell News,  
14th of November, 1973.

<sup>7</sup>"St. John's Episcopal Church".

<sup>8</sup>Church records.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid.

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

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 # \_\_\_\_\_

See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository:

Western Office, Archives & History  
Asheville, NC

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreage of property less than one acre (approximately .10 acre)

UTM References

A 

1	7	4	0	8	8	9	0	3	9	4	8	7	3	0
Zone			Easting				Northing							

B 

Zone			Easting				Northing							

C 

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

D 

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

See continuation sheet

**Verbal Boundary Description**

The boundary is indicated by the bold line defining the area labeled St. John's Episcopal Church as shown on the accompanying sketch map.

See continuation sheet

**Boundary Justification**

The boundary was drawn to include the church and sufficient setting within the lot which has been historically associated with the church.

See continuation sheet

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Sybil Arcintar Bowers, Preservation Planning Consultant  
organization Bowers Southeastern Preservation date August 31, 1990  
street & number P.O. Box 15722 telephone (704) 252-1392  
city or town Asheville state NC zip code 28813

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Historic and Architectural Resources in Downtown Marion, NC: St. John's  
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### MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Alexander, Ted. "Reconnaissance Survey of McDowell County."  
1985.

Church records. St. John's Episcopal Church. 1881-1970.

"Episcopal Church Built in 1881." McDowell News. 14th of  
November, 1973.

"St. John's Episcopal Church." McDowell News. 12th of  
August, 1985.

Wodehouse, Lawrence. "Architecture in North Carolina  
1700-1900." North Carolina Architect. February, 1970.

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Section number Photos Page 1

PHOTO LIST: ST. JOHN'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

The following information pertains to all photographs:

Name of Property.....	St. John's Episcopal Church
City and State.....	Marion, North Carolina
Photographer.....	Ted Alexander, 1985 photos Sybil A. Bowers, 1987-88, 1990 photos
Date taken.....	1985, except where noted otherwise All 1985 and 1987-88 photos have been field verified in 1990.
Location of original.....	Western Office, Archives & History negative Asheville, North Carolina

Photo A  
St. John's Episcopal Church; 315 S. Main Street  
Looking southeast at front of church

Photo B  
St. John's Episcopal Church; 315 S. Main Street  
Looking northwest.

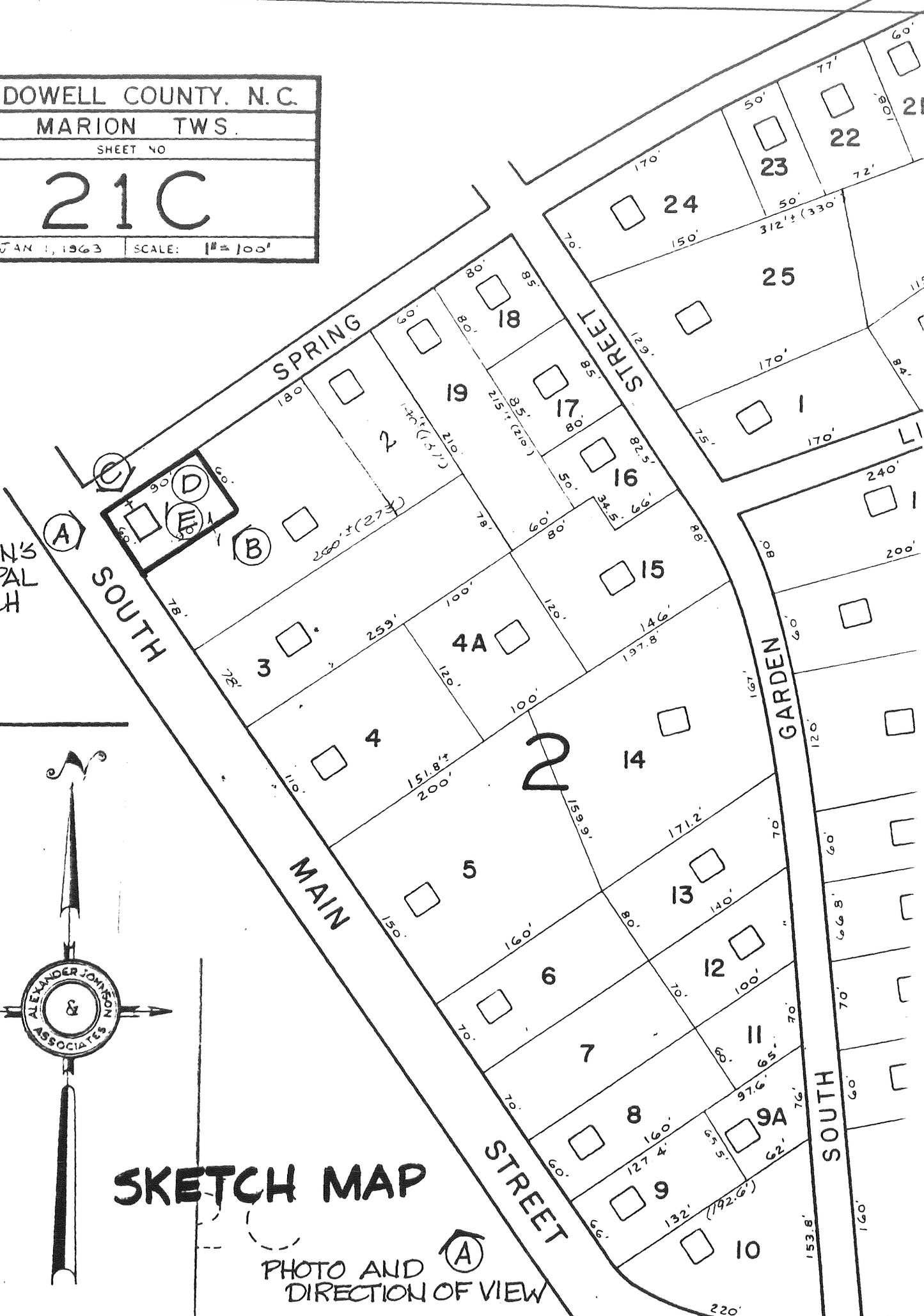
Photo C  
St. John's Episcopal Church; 315 S. Main Steeet  
Exterior entry detail.

Photo D  
St. John's Episcopal Church; 315 S. Main Street  
Looking east at altar; interior sanctuary.

Photo E  
St. John's Episcopal Church; 315 S. Main Street  
Looking west at rear of interior sanctuary.

MCDOWELL COUNTY. N.C.  
 MARION TWS.  
 SHEET NO  
**21C**  
 DATE: JAN 1, 1963 SCALE: 1" = 100'

ST. JOHN'S  
 EPISCOPAL  
 CHURCH



**SKETCH MAP**

PHOTO AND  
 DIRECTION OF VIEW



