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. Luke's Chapel
   other names/site number

2. Location
   street & number Hospital Drive at Old Twitty Ford Road N/A not for publication
   city, town Rutherfordton N/A vicinity
   state North Carolina code NC county Rutherford code 161 zip code 28139

3. Classification
   Ownership of Property Category of Property Number of Resources within Property
   ☑ private [X] building(s) Contributing Noncontributing
   ☐ public-local district 1 0 buildings
   ☐ public-State site 1 0 sites
   ☐ public-Federal structure 2 0 structures
   ☐ object 0 0 objects
   ☐
   Name of related multiple property listing: N/A
   Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this [X] 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 [X] meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. [ ] See continuation sheet.

[Signature of certifying official]

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]

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)
6. Function or Use

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)</th>
<th>Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RELIGION: religious structure</td>
<td>RELIGION: religious structure</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(enter categories from instructions)

OTHER: Vernacular Gothic Revival

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>foundation</th>
<th>brick</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>walls</td>
<td>weatherboard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>roof</td>
<td>asphalt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>other</td>
<td>shingle</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

St. Luke's Chapel, Rutherfordton, is located on the northeast corner of Hospital Drive and Old Twitty Ford Road, facing southwest. To the west of the chapel is the Rutherford Hospital complex, sited at the top of a broad hill overlooking the town of Rutherfordton. To the east of the chapel is the Mission House, now a private residence, constructed about 1908, slightly before the construction of the chapel that year. Further east on Hospital Drive are two other private homes, built in the first decade of the twentieth century to house mission and hospital staff. These buildings and the Mission House have been altered. St. Luke's Chapel is surrounded by brick pathways set in place by Mrs. Henry Norris when the chapel was constructed. To the rear of the building is a circular formal garden containing seasonal flowers and flowering shrubs, enclosed by a low brick wall with granite coping. In the center of the garden is a pedestal which originally held a sundial. Brick steps and pathways lead into and around the garden, which is sited below the level of the streets which bound the property on the west and southwest sides. A small front lawn is planted in grass and foundation plantings encircle the building. Elsewhere cedar trees and deciduous trees, shrubbery and flowers fill the property.

Brick steps rise to the entrance door of the chapel from a brick sidewalk leading from Hospital Drive. Steps and sidewalk were added when the chapel was moved fifteen feet back from the edge of Hospital Drive in 1965. This move was necessitated by the widening of Hospital Drive and brought the chapel building within the circumference of the walled garden, causing the removal of about one-eighth of the wall. The building itself was not altered.

St. Luke's Chapel is a small, one-story, frame, gable-front building with a one-story gable-roofed frame wing projecting from the east side wall. The wing was added to the plain, traditional, rectangular chapel about 1915 to provide space for a library. Both chapel and wing are weatherboarded. The main facade of the chapel is three-bay, with recessed entrance set between two-over-two windows. In the recess, steps lead to a four-panel door. The gable has a rectangular louver at its peak and is surmounted by a square steeple with pyramidal roof. All of the building's roofs are sheathed in asphalt shingles. The steeple is of

[X] See continuation sheet
wood shingles with rectangular louvers on the east and west sides. The two side elevations of the building are three-bay. All windows in the chapel part of the building are two-over-two sash of frosted glass, with the exception of two windows on the rear elevation which are smaller than the others but contain leaded glass centered with a shield motif. The main facade continues east of the chapel area across the library wing which is a single bay marked by an eight-over-eight fixed sash window immediately beneath the eaves. An identical window appears on the wing's rear elevation. A door opens on the gable end of the wing, but the exterior steps have been removed. Throughout, cornerboards, window and door trim and boxed cornice are plain. The foundation is brick.

The interior of St. Luke's Chapel is simple but elegant. Walls and ceilings are tongue-and-groove horizontal sheathing of stained pine. The rear wall behind the altar also features decorative paneling above a vertical sheathed wainscot. Door and window surrounds are molded and reeded and have reeded corner blocks. The recessed entrance provides space on either side of the entrance door, that to the west used for storage and to the east for the gracefully carved baptismal font and as a confessional. The wall between this area and the adjoining library contains a wood grate or grille through which a priest might hear confessions. A center aisle with red carpet leads between plain pews to the altar, centered in the rear wall between the decorative windows. The altar, set in front of a molded retable and dossal, is plain with a centered pattee cross and sits upon a molded base. A pump organ, original to the chapel and now electrified, has a spindle railing and carved music rack. A carved lectern and Bishop's chair complete the sanctuary furnishings. Pews in use at present were moved to the chapel from St. Joseph's church on the Green River plantation of Colonel and Mrs. Frank Coxe, replacing the original pews which were removed to St. Francis's Church in Rutherfordton in the 1940s. In the east wing, the chapel's finishes and details of painted sheathing, carpet, door and window surrounds are repeated. Shelves fill the northeast wall of the room and contain books from the Norris library.

All the original Rutherford Hospital buildings have been replaced and the Mission House and staff cottages on Hospital Drive have sustained extensive alterations. The chapel was secularized in 1945, but was re-dedicated and renovated in 1954. After its move away from the edge of Hospital Drive in 1965, a restoration project for building and garden was undertaken by the Nurses Alumnae Association. The chapel is the only remaining building of the original Rutherford Hospital complex.
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)  

Health/Medicine
Religion
Social History  

Period of Significance  

1909-1941

Significant Dates  

1909

Cultural Affiliation  

N/A

Significant Person  

Norris, Ethel Wheeler

Architect/Builder  

Unknown

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

St. Luke's Chapel is the oldest building on the grounds of Rutherford Hospital in the Rutherford County seat of Rutherfordton, and the only building remaining from the first years of the hospital. Rutherford Hospital, when it opened shortly after the turn of the twentieth century, introduced first-class surgical skills to the county. The weather-boarded, gable-front building with steeple was constructed in 1908 for Ethel Wheeler Norris, one of the founders of Rutherford Hospital, and is eligible for the National Register in the area of health/medicine as the only remaining building representative of the founding of Rutherford Hospital. The chapel is also eligible in the interrelated areas of religion and social history for its association with Mrs. Norris, who had it built and with its construction illustrated the philosophy of the American Social Gospel Movement, which flourished in the United States between 1890 and 1930, teaching that salvation requires social as well as individual change and action.

About 1915, a wing was added to the chapel building to provide room for a library. Anglo-Catholic services were discontinued in 1945 but the chapel was re-dedicated and refurbished in 1954. In 1965 following a move of approximately fifteen feet back on the lot, due to road widening, a formal garden, designed and planted by Mrs. Norris, was restored and a new brick pathway added at the front of the building. The chapel retains its orientation, setting and general environment on its original lot.

☑ See continuation sheet
When Rutherford Hospital was founded in 1906, hospitals were rare in western North Carolina. At the turn of the century, there were seven doctors in Rutherford County, but the closest hospitals were in Asheville, 55 miles to the west, and Charlotte, 60 miles to the southeast, and travel to those hospitals was slow and difficult. Operations, mostly of an emergency nature, were done in the home, where a room might be changed into a temporary operating room "... with sheets covering the germ-infested draperies." (1) Patients were taken to hospitals as a last resort and many refused to go at all. "No doubt many persons having peritonitis from ruptured appendices or typhoid perforations, or cases of strangulated hernia and cancer, all prevalent conditions at that time, died from lack of surgical care." (2)

The medical backgrounds of Dr. Henry Norris and his associate Dr. Montgomery Biggs, prepared them well to deal with surgery in a rural area. Norris graduated from the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine in 1896 and held a residency in surgery there. Dr. Biggs, also a graduate of the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine, was made the Chief Resident Surgeon in 1899, the first to hold this appointment at the University Hospital. From its founding in 1764, the Medical College of the University of Pennsylvania has been and continues to be a leader in medical research, treatment and training, and at the final decade of the nineteenth century, renowned surgeons held positions on the Medical College faculty, including C. H. Frazier in neurosurgery, D. Hayes Agnew and John Ashhurst in genito-urinary surgery, Howard A. Kelly in gynecology (later to be head of obstetrics and gynecology at Johns Hopkins). (3) Doctors Norris and Biggs, known in Rutherford County as "the Philadelphia doctors," (4) brought to Rutherford Hospital the latest and most successful of surgical techniques to be found anywhere in the nation. Mrs. Norris, trained at the University of Pennsylvania School of Nursing, brought up-to-date nursing skills to the new hospital. (5)

The hospital was immediately successful. From its opening in 1906 until March, 1911, when a new building was dedicated, a total of 1,302 operations were performed by Doctors Norris and Biggs. The majority of these cases were for appendicitis; other operations were for cancer, peritonitis, gunshot wounds, fractures, osteomyelitis, ruptures of several kinds, glaucoma, club foot, hairlip and treatment of burns. (6)
Rutherford Hospital remained primarily a surgical facility until 1948 when the first specialist in internal medicine joined the hospital staff. The hospital maintained a relationship with the Medical College of the University of Pennsylvania until 1932, offering a residency in surgery to graduates of the University of Pennsylvania College of Medicine. Nine surgeons, all graduates of the University of Pennsylvania, trained at Rutherford Hospital between 1923 and 1932. (7)

RELIGION AND SOCIAL HISTORY CONTEXT:

St. Luke's Chapel reflects the layman's belief in the Social Gospel Movement which prevailed in Protestant theology in the United States between 1870 and 1920 and which influenced the work of religious groups in missionary fields at home and abroad. The Social Gospel Movement was initiated and encouraged by Anglican clergymen Charles Kingsley, Charles Monroe Sheldon of Topeka, Kansas and Walter Rauschenbusch, a faculty member of the Rochester, New York, Theological Seminary. Kingsley (1819-1875) began a Christian social movement in England during the throes of the Industrial Revolution in that country, attempting to bring a Christian influence to the conditions of life and work in industry. Sheldon (1857-1946) an inspirational preacher and author, wrote In His Steps, depicting the life of Jesus in contemporary time. From 1896 at its publication until 1950, it was second only to the Bible in sales in the United States, with sales estimated at more than 8,000,000 copies. Sheldon encouraged his reader to live for a year as Jesus would have done. Rauschenbusch (1861-1918) was the major spokesman for the Social Gospel Movement in the United States, convincing readers of Christianity and the Social Crisis (1907) that the Kingdom of God requires social as well as individual salvation. (8)

Ethel Wheeler Norris (1875-1940) was a staunch Anglican, preferring the Anglo-Catholic or "high church" Episcopal service. She had ties to an Episcopal convent in Peekskill, New York, where her daughters were educated, and also was a social activist. (9) She and her husband, Dr. Henry Norris, saw the opportunity to participate in social salvation with the establishment of a hospital as well as a mission and chapel which would be the spiritual home of their own social action movement. In the Anglo-Catholic service the principles of Rev. Charles Kingsley would become visible through the liturgy, and in the work of the mission and the hospital, the Christian ethic could transform life for the farm and textile mill workers of Rutherford County.
In 1908 Mrs. Norris opened a mission house next to the Rutherford Hospital, and later that year she had a small, frame chapel constructed in the side yard. The daily round of Holy Communion, matins and evensong were conducted at the chapel, named for St. Luke, the Great Physician, by Father Frederick D. Lobdell and his associates. Father Lobdell, a friend of the Norris family in Philadelphia, served as Rector of St. Francis's Church in Rutherfordton. He was a monastic and social activist, and for a brief period in the 1920s sisters of the Order of St. Mary from Peekskill, New York, assisted at St. Luke's Chapel and at St. Francis's Church. (Their priory and mission house, well maintained but altered, stand today at 112 and 116 Hospital Drive, next to the chapel.) (10) By 1930 seven missions were operating in Rutherford and Polk Counties under the auspices of Father Lobdell and his associates. Three of the missions, in Shelby, Bat Cave and Rutherfordton, are active parishes today. In Rutherford County, St. Luke's Chapel offered the only Catholic (high) liturgy until 1940, when a Roman Catholic congregation was established. (11)

A number of schools and missions in North Carolina owe their establishment to the Social Gospel Movement, which after the 1920s was succeeded by modern economic and other forms of aid. St. Luke's Chapel illustrates a line of descent from Anglican liturgy and New York State academia which supplied the content of the Social Gospel Movement.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND:

Rutherfordton in 1900 was a country town of 800 and the seat of Rutherford County. In nearby Forest City there were 1,125 residents and perhaps 500 additional residents lived on the outskirts of the two towns. With the coming of the railroad to Rutherfordton in 1887, and with the growing textile industry in the county and the activities of the county seat, Rutherfordton saw a small boom in commercial activity. By 1906 the town had two banks, the Twitty and Iso-Thermal Hotels, a liquor "dispensary," several private schools, six physicians, twelve lawyers, a newspaper, the services of three railroads, a book store, drug store, hardware and jewelry stores, a door and flooring manufactory, harness and shoe shop and two dentists. Four cotton mills operated in Rutherford County, included among North Carolina's largest: one small mill operated inside the Rutherfordton city limits. (12)
Rutherford County also had a well-developed tourist industry, with visitors from all parts of the Eastern seaboard drawn to the hunting and fishing available in the heavily wooded, rolling areas of the county. One quail hunter who first visited at the Frank Coxe plantation on the Green River in Rutherford and Polk Counties in 1898 was Dr. Henry Norris of Philadelphia, who was destined to make Rutherfordton his home and to make a lasting impression on Rutherford County.

Dr. Henry Norris was born on May 27, 1875 in Philadelphia, the third of nine children. He attended private school in Philadelphia and graduated from the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine in 1896, at the age of 20. His family background included a number of physicians connected with the Pennsylvania Hospital, the nation's oldest and one of its most renowned. His family was acquainted with the family of Colonel Frank Coxe, one of the leading residents of Philadelphia and a philanthropist interested in the University of Pennsylvania and its hospital. Col. Coxe, who had opened the Battery Park Hotel in Asheville in 1886, owned the Green River Plantation in Rutherford and Polk Counties. When Dr. Henry Norris was married to Ethel Wheeler of Philadelphia in 1898, the Coxes invited the young couple to honeymoon in Rutherford County. (13)

Ethel Bowman Wheeler was born in Philadelphia on November 16, 1875 and attended schools in New York and Germany. She entered the University of Pennsylvania Training School for Nurses, where she met and married Henry Norris. Mrs. Norris, also a friend of the Coxe family, enjoyed visiting Rutherford County and she and her husband were soon impressed with the need of the area for a hospital which would specialize in surgical cases, Dr. Norris's field. On visits to the Green River Plantation after 1898 and to Rutherfordton, where he acted as consultant on several medical emergencies and performed several operations before 1906, Dr. and Mrs. Norris decided to open a hospital in the town of Rutherfordton. They interested their medical school friend, Dr. Montgomery Biggs, in their project and in 1906 he joined the Norrises in Rutherfordton. Dr. Biggs was born in Hinsdale, Illinois, on May 7, 1870, and obtained his MD degree from the University of Pennsylvania in 1897. In 1899 he was the Chief Resident Surgeon of the University of Pennsylvania hospital, the first to hold this position. From 1900 to 1906 he held positions on the surgical staff of the University of Pennsylvania hospital, studied in Vienna, and was the chief resident surgeon of the Philadelphia General Hospital. He came to Rutherford Hospital with the best surgical training to be had at the time. (14)
In 1906 Mrs. Norris purchased the property of the old Rutherford Military Institute from the town of Rutherfordton for $1,500.00. (15) She also bought some adjacent property and with later purchases the Norrises acquired about 150 acres on the "school house" hill overlooking the town. The school property in 1906 consisted of a large, two-story frame school building with a connecting one-story room on either side. South of the main building was the old residence of the headmaster. These buildings were moved and reconstructed to provide a hospital building with wards, operating room, sterilizing room, recovery and examining rooms, business offices, private rooms, bathrooms, a nurses home and a staff house. Electric lighting for the hospital was obtained from a Delco plant and hospital furniture and furnishings were shipped from Philadelphia. The headmaster's residence was enlarged for the Norris family and for Dr. Biggs. Its kitchen was used to prepare food for the hospital. (16) The hospital had its own water supply, vegetable garden and herd of Jersey cows. Charges were $14 per week in the ward and private rooms ranged from $2.50 to $4.50 per day. Most patients came by train, and the first paved road in Rutherfordton ran from the depot to the hospital. (17) Until 1925, expenses of the hospital plant and renovations and construction were paid for by Mrs. Norris; in 1925 the hospital showed a profit for the first time. (18)

Ethel Wheeler Norris was an ardent Episcopalian and deeply religious. She was an active member of St. Francis's Church in Rutherfordton and frequently attended the Coxe family church, St. Joseph's, at Green River. But her preference was for the Anglo-Catholic service, known also as "high-church" Episcopalian, and she set about to build a chapel on the hospital grounds which would offer Anglican liturgy and serve as the base for the missionary work by which she and her associates might minister to hospital patients and mill workers in Rutherford County. In 1908 Mrs. Norris encouraged a friend, the Rev. Frederick Lobdell, to become rector at St. Francis's church and to undertake the mission work at the hospital. Frederick Lobdell graduated from Trinity Collage and the Berkeley Divinity School. He was ordained priest in 1889, and became a member of the Companions of Our Saviour, located at St. Elizabeth's Church in Philadelphia, exercising his ministry largely among the city's sick and poor. In Rutherfordton, Mrs. Norris constructed a mission house for Father Lobdell's work on Hospital Drive and in 1908 erected a chapel on the hospital property, named for St. Luke. She added a formal garden to the rear of the chapel and put down the herringbone-pattern brick walks herself. (19) In 1909 the Norrises gave the chapel to the Missionary Diocese of the Episcopal Church in Western North Carolina. (20) About 1915 a one-room wing was added to the east side of the chapel to provide room for a small library, which contains to this day a number of volumes from the Norris family library.
The old school building was replaced in 1911 by a modern hospital building, and since that date, all the original hospital buildings have been removed. A complete modern medical plant now serves Rutherford County. After 1945 St. Luke's Chapel fell into dis-use and was secularized, becoming an interdenominational chapel and storage area. The chapel was rehabilitated and re-dedicated in 1954 and in 1965, when the widening of Hospital Drive forced the move of the chapel building some fifteen feet to the north, a new foundation was provided for the building and the grounds between the facade and Hospital Drive were relandscaped. This project was sponsored by the Nurses Alumnae Association. (21) The chapel is open daily for meditation and for special events.


5. Ibid., p. 50.

6. Ibid., p. 27.

7. Ibid., p. 67.


9. Correspondence, June 7, 1968, from Mrs. William J. Robinson, formerly Ethel Norris


11. Ibid., p. 239.

12. Ibid., pp. 668-673.


17. Rutherford County Bicentennial Committee, op. cit., p. 672.


9. Major Bibliographical References


Robinson, Mrs. Ethel Norris, correspondence, June 7, 1968.


Rutherford County Register of Deeds, Rutherford County Courthouse, Rutherfordton.


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:

☐ State historic preservation office

☐ Other State agency

☐ Federal agency

☐ Local government

☐ University

☐ Other

Specify repository:

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property __________ 0.43 acre

UTM References

A [1 7] [1 3 7] [1 2 7] [1 7 3] [1 3 7] [1 3 6] B [1 ] [1 ] [1 ] [1 ] [1 ] [1 ]

Zone [1 ] [1 ] [1 ] [1 ] [1 ] [1 ]

Easting [1 3 7] [1 3 7] [1 3 7] [1 3 7] [1 3 7] [1 3 7]

Northing [1 3 7] [1 3 7] [1 3 7] [1 3 7] [1 3 7] [1 3 7]

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Easting [1 3 7] [1 3 7] [1 3 7] [1 3 7] [1 3 7] [1 3 7]

Northing [1 3 7] [1 3 7] [1 3 7] [1 3 7] [1 3 7] [1 3 7]

☐ See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The nominated property comprises all of parcel 3, block 4, sheet 30, of maps of the office of the Rutherford County Tax Assessor.

☐ See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The nominated property comprises all the property historically associated with St. Luke's Chapel.

☐ See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

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organization Consultant
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