

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 Valle Crucis Episcopal Mission

other names/site number Valle Crucis Conference Center

### 2. Location

street & number Highway 194, north side, 1 mile SW of N/A  not for publication  
junction of SR 1112

city or town Valle Crucis  vicinity

state North Carolina code NC county Watauga code 189 zip code 28691

### 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.)

William J. Price 7-14-93  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

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

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Valle Crucis Episcopal Mission  
Name of Property

Watauga Co., NC  
County and State

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**  
(Check as many boxes as apply)

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

**Category of Property**  
(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>7</u>	<u>14</u>	buildings
<u>4</u>		sites
<u>1</u>		structures
		objects
<u>12</u>	<u>14</u>	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 facility  
Agriculture/agricultural field  
Agriculture/animal facility  
Agriculture/storage  
Education/school

**Current Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

Religion/religious facility

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

Stone & Frame Barns  
Bungalow/Craftsman  
Late Gothic Revival

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Stone/sandstone  
walls Stone/sandstone  
Wood/weatherboard  
roof Slate  
other Concrete  
Stone

**Narrative Description**

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

Valle Crucis Episcopal Mission  
Name of Property

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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.)

- 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.
- 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:

- 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)

Religion  
Education  
Agriculture

Period of Significance

1896 - 1942

Significant Dates

1896

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:

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

Name of repository:

Western Diocese of NC Offices

Valle Crucis Episcopal Mission  
Name of Property

Watauga Co., NC  
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10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 426.9

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	17	427790	4006780
Zone	Easting	Northing	
2	17	429710	4006330
Zone	Easting	Northing	

3	17	429490	4004940
Zone	Easting	Northing	
4	17	426940	4005070
Zone	Easting	Northing	

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 Katherine H. Richardson

organization Heritage Preservation Associates date 6-19-92

street & number 1445 Whittaker Dr. telephone 803-787-9673

city or town Columbia state SC zip code 29206

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 Episcopal Diocese of North Carolina

street & number Bishop Henry Center, Vance Ave. telephone 704-669-2921

city or town Black Mountain state NC zip code 28711

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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Valle Crucis Episcopal Mission  
Watauga Co., N. C.

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**Narrative Description**

The Valle Crucis Episcopal Mission at Valle Crucis is located on Highway 194, one mile southwest of the community of Valle Crucis, Watauga County, North Carolina. This mission of the Episcopal Church was first proposed in 1842 and the first buildings were begun in 1844 in what was then a remote mountain valley that had not been reached by a church of any denomination. The valley was named Valle Crucis, or Vale of the Cross, because of the confluence of Dutch Creek, Clark Creek, and Craborchard Creeks, which appears to form a cross. From the beginning, a vital part of the work of the mission included a school, at one time a seminary, and later an agricultural and industrial school. The first buildings erected at the mission were built in the broad plain of the valley along the old Dutch Creek Road and were not habitable by the 1890s. The extant historic structures at the mission date from the 1890s through about 1920, with the exception of one log building said to date from the early years of the mission. The cultural resources at Valle Crucis include two dormitories, a church, a cemetery, a late nineteenth century house, an early twentieth century bungalow, four barns, a power dam, and the historic landscape.

One cluster of buildings stands at the foot of Valle Mountain, down which Craborchard Creek cascades in waterfall. These buildings on the mountain overlook a broad valley through which runs Dutch Creek. The buildings on the mountainside constitute the heart of the mission center in its present use as a conference center and contains two dormitory buildings, the church, a meeting hall, the log building, the bungalow, and the cemetery. Below this cluster on the mountain is another group of buildings at the edge of the valley where the cascade of Craborchard Creek runs in a stream. This cluster includes two barns, the old chapel, and a late nineteenth century house. The valley contains broad agricultural fields on each side of Dutch Creek which were at one time productive in raising apples, hay, and staple crops. These fields, which were under cultivation when the mission first acquired this land in 1844, are presently planted in vegetables and hay and contain two barns. The apple orchard was also planted on Valle Mountain; some of the old trees remain on the hill and still bear fruit. The mission's acreage on Valle Mountain, now covered by dense forests, was logged in the twentieth century, providing financial support for the mission. This acreage has historically been vital to the mission and is an integral part of its history. At the crest of Valle Mountain is the old concrete power dam which harnessed the water

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power of Craborchard Creek to provide the first electricity in Watauga County. Highway 194 runs from the Watauga River to Boone, meandering up the mountain along Craborchard Creek at the edge of the valley, then climbs the mountainside, skirting the main cluster of buildings, past which it continues to the crest of the mountain and down the other side.

The mission center has operated continuously since 1844, erecting buildings to suit its changing needs and roles in the community, and presently maintains its integrity as a historical record of the educational and religious life of the people of Valle Crucis and the surrounding neighborhoods. The majority of the extant buildings represent construction during a period of renewed interest in the missionary life of the Episcopal church in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when the mission built an agricultural and industrial school and model farm and began to raise apples and cattle as a commercial venture. The only structure remaining from the early years of the mission is a log building, said to be the house of Bishop Levi Silliman Ives, which was moved to the mountainside from the valley in the twentieth century.

There are twelve contributing primary resources and fourteen non-contributing resources in the district. Most of the non-contributing resources are traditional in terms of form and material and thus are not intrusive; seven of them are unobtrusive sheds and garages. The landscape, which is a contributing resource, has historically been associated with the mission and school. This historical landscape contains over four hundred acres, consisting of a wooded mountainside, an orchard, and pastures and cultivated fields. The following constitute the contributing and non-contributing buildings and cultural resources at the mission center.

1. Church of the Holy Cross. Contributing. Built c. 1924.

This Gothic Revival style, gable-front stone church laid in irregular courses of rough cut ashlar exhibits parapets with no rake and a slate roof. A parapeted gabled ell at the northwestern end of the southwest elevation and a smaller gabled narthex at the southeast end of the same elevation give the building an asymmetrical form. The church has lancet windows containing diamond shaped stained glass. A large triple traceried lancet window and a stone cross at the apex of the gable dominate the front elevation; at the opposite end a similar window is on the wall above the alter. The interior exhibits open trusswork

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and a parquet floor. The building was constructed of native stone by local labor.

2. The Cemetery, Church of the Holy Cross. Contributing.

Located on the hill southeast of the church, this cemetery is an integral part of the historical landscape and complex at the Valle Crucis Episcopal Mission. The cemetery pre-dates the Church of the Holy Cross, the earliest grave being a slate slab with scratched letters marking the resting place of Peter Townsend, who died on October 4, 1808. The majority of the marked burials occurred here between 1880 and 1930. Small white marble headstones in the cemetery mark late nineteenth century graves. The majority of the twentieth century headstones are of granite. The cemetery contains approximately fifty graves.

3. Skiles Hall. Non-contributing. Built in 1970s.

This building serves as the parish house for Church of the Holy Cross. It is a one-story weatherboard building over a raised basement of concrete block with a front porch under the principal roof. It has an internal stone chimney.

4. Bishop Ives House. Non-contributing. Built mid-nineteenth century.

According to tradition, this was one of the first buildings built at Valle Crucis and was used by Bishop Ives when he visited the mission. It stood in the valley of the Mission School for many years and has been moved twice in the twentieth century, the second time in 1956.<sup>1</sup> The building has been extensively altered.

This hewn log house rests on a stone foundation. Its corner notching is square cut, as are the logs. It is now one story and is now roofed with asphalt shingles. Originally, the building was one-and-one-half stories; when it was shortened, the upper logs were used to replace deteriorated logs at the bottom. The southeastern facade contains a centrally placed door with two flanking windows. Two rear doors, one centrally placed and another which opened into the southwestern room, as well as a window in the western wall of the northwestern room, have been

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<sup>1</sup>Lawrence F. London, et al., eds., The Episcopal Church in North Carolina, 1701-1959, (Raleigh: The Episcopal Diocese of North Carolina, 1987), p. 187; Old painting of this log building in situ; Oral tradition of Valle Crucis Mission.

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sealed with square log construction. A door has been placed in the southwestern gable end. There is no indication that the cabin was ever weatherboarded.

Notches visible on each side of the front door are the ends of hewn joints, indicating the position of the interior walls. The floor plan of the cabin is a saddlebag two-unit plan. The central chimney, built of stone, contains two fireplaces which open into the two rooms. The ceilings in these rooms have been lowered, preventing a view of the log construction which remains intact above. Panelling has been added to the interior walls and the windows are modern replacements.

5. Auchmuty Hall. Contributing. Built 1910-11.<sup>2</sup>

This 2 1/2-story dormitory is of concrete block construction on a stone foundation. Molded concrete block resembling rough cut stone appears as a stringcourse, at corners as quoins, and at each side of the double hung six-over-six windows. It has a hip on gable roof with pents enclosing the gable and dormers on all four sides; presently the roof and dormers are sheathed with asphalt shingles, though the dormers appear to have been weatherboard in early photographs. A central chimney of concrete block services the fireplace on the first floor. The building has a one-story wrap around wooden porch on the southwestern, southeastern, and northeastern elevations with a simple wooden balustrade, square wooden posts with decorative brackets at the soffit board, and exposed rafters. Due to the slope of the site, the porch on the long southeastern side is elevated a story above a full basement. The external doors to the dormitory are on the first floor, one on the northeastern elevation, one centrally located on the southeastern elevation, and two on the southwestern facade.

A central hall runs through all three floors of the building. The interior walls and ceilings are covered in horizontal beaded tongue and groove boards, which is stained a dark color. The main room on the first floor has a mantel of random ashlar stone. Square newel posts with recessed panels ornament the double stairways to the upper floors. The building accommodates sixty people. Steam heat is still in use; a sprinkler system was recently installed when the building was rewired for the first

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<sup>2</sup>James B. Sill, Historical Sketches of the Churches in the Diocese of Western North Carolina Episcopal Church, (Asheville: Publishing Office of the Church of the Redeemer, 1955), p. 97.

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time. The building retains much integrity, having been virtually unchanged since its construction.

6. The Annex. Contributing. c. 1920.

This hall stands on the site of the Auxiliary Hall, a classroom/dining room/kitchen facility which burned to the ground on June 1, 1919.<sup>3</sup> It is two-story over a raised basement and is built into a hillside, making the gable end of the building appear to be a single story. It is built of clay tile masonry on a concrete foundation, though the northwestern foundation is an intact stone wall of the old Auxiliary Hall. The exterior walls of the first two stories have been clad with concrete. The asphalt shingle roof is hipped on the southeastern end of the building and gable end on the northwestern facade. It has two interior chimneys. The long rectangular structure is entered by a two-story stair ell on the southwestern facade which once was connected to Auchmuty Hall by a double-decked walkway. A wrap-around porch on the first story of the southwestern and southeastern facades echoes the detailing on the porch of Auchmuty Hall.

The basement is used for storage and maintenance offices, the first floor contains dormitory space for thirty-eight people, and the upper floor houses a large dining room, kitchen, and pantry rooms. The dining room has exposed 'W' truss work and at one end contains a raised platform for a stage. A shed roof addition as well as an addition to the kitchen have been made on the third floor of the northwestern facade. Other than these additions, the building has not been changed dramatically since its construction.

7. Garbage Pen. Non-contributing. Post-WWII.

This cement block garbage pen has a metal roof and a frame and wire door and stands behind the Annex near the kitchen door.

8. "The Farm House." Contributing. Built 1915.

This bungalow/Craftsman style house, situated on the hill above the church and log building, was once surrounded by an apple orchard. The house accommodates 21 people. It is a gable end, weatherboarded, two-story house over a full basement that is raised on the eastern side due to the slope of the site. The foundation is partially stone and partially concrete block. The

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<sup>3</sup>Sill, pp. 97-8.

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house has a recessed front porch which wraps around the southeastern corner of the house. Shed dormers containing four windows, on both the front and back, extend the living space on the second floor of the house. The roof is clad with asphalt shingles and has a central chimney. The mantel in the living room has a simple wooden surround and shelf.

At some time, a portion of the front porch was enclosed to provide additional space in the kitchen. This addition was clad with weatherboard and the tripart windows from the original porch wall were reused on the extended section. Also, a small recessed side porch at the back of the kitchen was enclosed with weatherboard and an exterior door and small window were added to this western facade of the house. Despite these changes, the house maintains its basic integrity.

9. Garage. Non-contributing. Post-WWII.

This post-in-ground gable end building is clad in vertical boards and has a metal roof. A shed is attached to the southeastern side under an extended roof. The front of the building has a large opening for a vehicle and a door in the southeastern side opens into the shed. The northwestern facade has a window opening with no sash.

10. Former Chapel. Non-contributing. Built between 1908 and 1911.<sup>4</sup>

This weatherboarded, gable front building has a shed roofed porch on the southwestern facade and a shed roof addition on the northeastern elevation. The building rests on part stone and part concrete block piers and has a rolled seam metal roof. The northwestern facade has a central front door and a wooden vent in the gable end. The door is protected by an open shed which extends the width of the facade, and is supported by simple wooden posts. The southwestern facade has an extended roof porch on which is a door on the extreme right end, flanked on its left by two windows. This porch is supported by stripped tree trunks which are diagonally braced by simple rustic spandrels.

The chapel was used for religious services until it was superseded by the Church of the Holy Cross in c. 1924. It was later used as a barn. The building presently houses the Valle Crucis Day School. Extensive alterations include additions to three elevations of the building: a shed at the gable front, an

<sup>4</sup>Sill, p. 96.

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engaged shed wing on the northeastern side, and an engaged shed porch on the southeastern side; a polygonal apse has also been removed.

11. Shed. Non-contributing.

This small, dilapidated shed is of frame construction and is covered with boards. It has a metal shed roof and stands near the northwestern facade of the old chapel.

12. Former Dairy Barn (Now "The Apple Barn.") Contributing.  
Built between 1903 and 1911.

It appears that this barn was built between 1903, when a renewed interest in the mission developed under Bishop Horner and a herd of registered Holstein cattle were purchased, and 1911, when a report on the agricultural school at Valle Crucis stated, "there is a farm . . . also a wagon factory, provided with machinery, with a saw mill and blacksmith shop." An old photograph shows the barn with an octagonal wooden silo on its southeastern gable end. Next to it, to the southeast, was another barn-like structure which may have been the wagon factory. Both the latter building and the silo are no longer extant, though the foundation for the silo is still visible.<sup>5</sup>

This barn is a two story structure measuring 76.5 by 40 feet. The walls of the lower story are stone and the rest of the building is of frame construction and is weatherboarded. It presently has a metal roof. Access is gained to the first floor through a single door on the northwestern end and through two double doors and a single door on the southeastern end. The southeastern-most double door is likely not original to the building, for the silo would have prevented its use and there is evidence of an opening being made after construction of the building for this entryway. Entry to the second floor was originally gained by one exterior door on the southwestern facade, reached by a flight of simple wooden steps and a wooden platform. A small gabled hood sheltered the platform. The hood has been removed and the platform extended to serve two additional doors. Symmetrically placed single-sash windows, hinged at the bottom to open inward, extend on three sides of the barn at both floors. Each gable end has a wooden lattice vent in the half story. The interior, designed for use as a dairy, has been little altered.

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<sup>5</sup>Sill, p. 97; Valle Crucis Photograph Collection.

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13. Former Apple Barn (Now "The Bunk House.") Contributing.  
Built 1914.

This banked barn is a gable end structure on a raised basement of stone with a weatherboarded second story. The basement, used to store apples before shipment, is entered by an insulated door on the northeastern elevation. The door to the second floor, panelled with a pane of glass at the top, is reached by a straight flight of wooden steps. The steps are sheltered by an engaged shed roof which extends to the roof of the dairy barn, allowing one to go from one to another without leaving the shelter of a roof. Two single sash windows are located on each side of the entrance. The gable ends are blank except for large wooden lattice vents; five additional attic vents rest on the northeastern slope of the metal roof. Now known as "The Bunk House," the former barn is used for dormitory space. The interior of the second story has exposed ceiling joists resting on heavy beams supported by wooden posts topped by impost blocks. The building is intact and the only significant change is interior plywood panelling added when the barn was converted to dormitory space in the 1960s. The walls originally were lined with sheets of cork for insulation, which may still be in place under the panelling.

14. The Mission House. Contributing. 1896.

This house, the first building constructed during Bishop Cheshire's administration of the diocese in the latter part of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, symbolizes the renewed interest in the mission at Valle Crucis. Built to house teachers and students, it is a four-square, gable front weatherboard house resting on stone piers filled in with concrete blocks. The very tall, steeply pitched gables, each containing a single-sash window, are surfaced with wooden shingles. On the first and second floors the house is three bay on all sides. A one story, hipped roof addition has been made to the rear, or northeastern elevation, in the latter part of the twentieth century. The house has two interior brick chimneys, one on each slope of the roof which is covered with asphalt shingles. The centrally placed front door is flanked by double six over six double-hung windows; all other windows are single. The hipped roof front porch rests on a tall concrete block foundation. Presently, it has a simple wooden balustrade and six unadorned wooden posts. The steps to the front porch are a straight flight of cement stairs. Originally, this porch had a wider flight of

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wooden steps and only four porch supports and possibly only a wooden rail with no balusters.

15. Shed. Non-contributing. c. 1970.

This concrete block out-building has an asphalt shingle shed roof and a wooden door. It stands on the hill behind the Mission House.

16. Shed. Non-contributing. c. 1970.

This corrugated metal sided building is of frame construction. It has a shed roof with a metal roof and a large door on the southeastern elevation which provides entry for a vehicle. It stands behind the Mission House.

17. Shed. Non-contributing. c. 1970.

This shed, which also stands behind the Mission House, is sheathed in vertical boards and has a metal shed roof. Two doors, one with a wooden shuttered window above it, are on its southeastern facade.

18. Garage. Non-contributing. c. 1950.

This double garage building is of post-in-ground construction and is sheathed in vertical boards. It has a shed roof covered in asphalt shingle and two doors for vehicles on its southwestern facade. It stands below Auchmuty Hall in the field beside the road to Hay Barn No. 1.

19. Hay Barn No. 1. Non-contributing. c. 1950.

It is of post-in-ground construction with wood sheathing and is partially covered with asphalt shingles. The barn is one story with a loft and has a standing seam metal gambrel roof. Three windows with no sash are on each side of the barn. The barn is accessed from the front by two wooden doors and by three doors at the rear of the barn. The loft has an exterior door on each end of the building.

20. Hay Barn No. 2. Non-contributing. c. 1950.

It is a gable end building with a standing seam metal roof; additions on each side of the barn are under extended shed roofs. It is of post-in-ground construction with wood sheathing. The one story barn has a loft with a wooden door in the southwestern gable; four doors provide access to the barn at ground level on this facade. A door on the northwestern facade provides entry

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into that addition.

21. "The Rector's House." Non-contributing. c. 1970.

Past Hay Barn No. 2 on Dutch Creek Road stands the house occupied by the director of the Valle Crucis Conference Center. It is a gable end two-story house built into a hillside. The lower story is of brick construction; the upper story is frame construction covered in vertical boards. The main entrance on the ground level of the northwestern elevation is flanked by double-hung one over one sashes. A wooden deck above the main entrance is accessed by two sliding glass doors from the second floor of the house and by a flight of wooden steps with one landing from the ground level. A concrete patio is below the deck outside the front door. The roof is covered with asphalt shingles.

22. "The Rectory." Non-contributing. c. 1970.

This house, built in c. 1970, is the home of the rector of Church of the Holy Cross. It stands on Highway 194 past the Farm House. This brick two-story split level house has a simple shed roof porch on the southeastern facade which leads to the front door. To the left of the front door is a bay window, above which is a double-hung six over six window on the second story. To the right of the are symmetrically placed six over six windows, two on the first floor and two on the second story. It has an exterior brick chimney which was enclosed on the first floor when car port was made into a room. The roof is covered with asphalt shingles.

23. The Power Dam. Contributing. Built between 1903 and 1930.

This dam, built at the crest of Vallé Mountain where Craborchard Creek begins its descent down a vast waterfall, was used to harness the water power to provide the first electricity in Watauga County for the buildings at Valle Crucis. It is built of poured concrete. The water from the pond which backed up behind the dam was piped down the mountain, apparently in an enclosed wooden mill race. The race was secured to metal stripping which can still be found in places in the streambed as it descends the mountain. At the bottom of the mountain, near the Mission House, where Craborchard Creek changes from a tumultuous waterfall into a peacefully flowing stream, the water piped down the mountain produced electricity using a water powered generator. A flood in 1940 destroyed the electric plant on Craborchard Creek. The dam remains at the crest of the

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mountain though the machinery which produced the power no longer remains.

24. The Landscape. Contributing.

A. The Valley/Field. Contributing Site.

The valley below the buildings at Valle Crucis was under cultivation when Bishop Ives bought the first acreage for the mission in 1844 and has historically been farmed by the students attending the agricultural school at the mission. In this valley, along the banks of Dutch Creek, stood the earliest buildings erected at the mission. These buildings were in ruins by 1900. Historical features of the landscape in the field include an unpaved farm road, Dutch Creek, wooded hills, and rolling pasture land.

B. The Apple Orchard. Contributing Site.

In 1911, the report on progress at Valle Crucis stated that sixty-five acres were "set out in apple orchards, which, it is proposed, will provide an income for the maintenance of the school." A c. 1910 postcard graphically locates the old orchard which covered the southwestern portion of the broad field which spreads below Auchmuty Hall and the hill behind Auchmuty Hall. Many of these trees, which are about eighty years old, remain on the hill and bear fruit annually.<sup>6</sup>

C. The Mountain Acreage. Contributing Site.

The mission at Valle Crucis included over 700 acres by 1911. Much of the 437.5 acre tract which remains in the hands of the mission is located on Valle Mountain. This land is now covered by a dense forest but was once logged to provide income for the mission school. An old logging road still climbs the steep mountainside. Craborchard Creek, harnessed by the mission for electric power, cascades down the mountain to a streambed which runs through the valley. This acreage has historically been vital to the mission and is an integral part of its history.

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<sup>6</sup>Sill, p. 97; Valle Crucis Photograph Collection.

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### Summary Paragraph

The Valle Crucis Episcopal Mission is a locally significant cultural resource. It was established by the Episcopal Church in 1844-5, under the direction of Bishop Levi Silliman Ives, and it exerted a significant force in the lives of the people of Watauga County for a century. For the people of the county, it provided the first established church in that area, the first school where youth could receive classical and religious education, and a seminary where men could train for the ministry. At Valle Crucis were trained the Episcopalian pastors who led the earliest churches of that denomination in western North Carolina. Valle Crucis became a model for the establishment of church sponsored industrial and agricultural schools throughout the western part of the state. Until 1943 when the school was closed due to the effects of World War II on the economy, the mission at Valle Crucis provided practical experience in agricultural techniques and living skills for the otherwise isolated people of the mountain valleys and hills of Watauga County. Perhaps more importantly, it provided a forum wherein they could learn to live "in community," rather than in the isolation so prevalent in the years prior to the establishment of the mission. The cultural resources at the Valle Crucis Conference Center, which include two dormitories, a church, two barns, and two houses, as well as the historical landscape, are a testament to the mission's religious, educational, industrial, and agricultural impact on the community in this valley of the cross and the surrounding areas. The beginning of the period of significance is based upon the Mission House built in 1896, the oldest resource retaining historic integrity and a symbol of renewed interest in the mission under Bishop Cheshire's administration.

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### Historic Contexts: Religion, Education, and Agriculture

The Valle Crucis Episcopal Mission was founded in what is now Watauga County, then Ashe County, in 1844. It is in the extreme northwest portion of the state in the Appalachian Mountains. The mission was founded on land traversed by the old Mountain Valley Road, now known as N.C. 194, which runs from the Watauga River and the town of Valle Crucis southwest to Boone, North Carolina.

The Valle Crucis Mission has significance at the local level for many reasons. The mission met many needs never before addressed in this area of Watauga County. In 1842, when Rev. Henry Prout, an Episcopalian minister, came to work in the area of the Watauga River, he found a people neglected by any and all denominations. The last church service held in the area had been seven years before in 1835, and this by a travelling minister. The people were isolated, living in cabins along streams or on mountain sides, but not in close proximity to neighbors with whom they had regular contact. This minister who called for people to gather in one set place for a religious meeting began a social trend which eventually built "community" where none had been before.<sup>7</sup>

The mountain valley which became known as Valle Crucis was an especially remote spot, and when Prout visited there in 1843 and held a service for a small crowd, he was touched by the real needs of the people. Upon his urging, Bishop Levi Silliman Ives visited the valley, which he named Valle Crucis, and in 1844 established the mission there. Valle Crucis became a center of activity within the next two years.<sup>8</sup>

The Mission's stated goals were

to extend the gospel throughout the territory, thirty or forty miles in every direction, to a religiously destitute people; to give rudimentary instruction to poor children of the immediate neighborhood on terms their parents could afford; to receive into the institution young men of talent from the surrounding country, on condition that

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<sup>7</sup>Mrs. James Fennimore Cooper, Missionary Life at Valle Crucis, n.p., 1889, pp. 1-14.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., pp. 17-8.

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they should serve as teachers and catechists . . . ; to train boys of talent or merit for the ministry . . . ; to give theological training to candidates for holy orders; to conduct a general school both classical and agricultural; and to maintain a model farm, both as an aid of supporting the mission and as a means of instructing the surrounding population in improved agriculture.<sup>9</sup>

The Valle Crucis Mission, though experiencing periods of wax and wane, fulfilled these goals throughout the years from 1844 to 1943, when the school was closed because of World War II.<sup>10</sup>

In the process of meeting their stated goals, Valle Crucis took on significance in regard to the religious development of the area, establishing a chapel and a seminary to train Episcopal ministers. The eight ministerial candidates trained at Valle Crucis before the seminary closed in c. 1852 were instrumental in the establishment of the Episcopal Church in western North Carolina.<sup>11</sup>

Public education had a slow start in North Carolina. The University of North Carolina, chartered as a state school in 1795, attracted only 65 students in the year 1810. In 1816, Archibald Murphey stated that elementary education in the state, in large measure, was left to chance and that as a result thousands were growing up in total ignorance. In 1832, the estimate of the number of illiterate children in the state between the ages of five and fifteen numbered 120,000. The 1840 census numbered the illiterate adults in North Carolina as one third of the population. The establishment of public schools in North Carolina was a decision left to individual counties after the passage of the 1839 law providing for an election in each county to approve the establishment of public education. It was not until 1846 that public education could be received in all of North Carolina's counties. The public schools, known as common schools, varied widely in their success and they were relatively

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<sup>9</sup>Marshall DeLancey Haywood, Lives of the Bishops of North Carolina..., (Raleigh: Alfred Williams & Co., 1910), p. 110.

<sup>10</sup>London, et al., pp. 473-476.

<sup>11</sup>Sill, p. 30.

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few in number until 1860. <sup>12</sup>

Fortunately, the state was not the only source of progress in education. Private religious schools sponsored by several denominations had a great impact on the advancement of higher education in the state of North Carolina after 1800. Historian William K. Boyd wrote of this phenomena,

The great revival which swept the state from 1800 to 1811 was followed by smaller waves of evangelism. This deepened the religious consciousness; and it in turn created the demand for institutions sound in religious doctrine, in which candidates for the ministry and also the sons of religious people could be trained without compromising their faith. Moreover the strongest organization through which people were bound to one another and could be reached was the church. It was therefore natural that the demand for more educational facilities should express itself through church organizations.<sup>13</sup>

Thus, the educational goal of Valle Crucis Mission developed as the need for widespread education was felt in the state, and during a period when the church was considered a proper vehicle for the establishment of schools. Moreover, the Episcopal Church's establishment of an educational center for the people of Watauga County preceeded successful efforts of the state of North Carolina to do the same.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>William K. Boyd, History of North Carolina, vol. II, The Federal Period, 1783-1860, (Chicago: The Lewis Publishing Co., 1919), pp. 103, 242-4, 246-9; William S. Powell, North Carolina Through Four Centuries, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989), pp. 245-7.

<sup>13</sup>Boyd, p. 365.

<sup>14</sup>William A. Whisenhunt, The Diocese of Western North Carolina, 1790 - 1922, A Struggle for Identity and Independence, (n.p., 1984), p. 16.

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The movement to establish agricultural schools in the state effectively began with what were known as "Manual Labor Schools," where students studied classical education in the morning and toiled in the fields in the afternoon. Founded by the Presbyterians, the earliest institution based on this principle was established at Fayetteville in 1833, and was chartered the Donaldson Academy and Manual Labor School. Others to try this method were Wake Forest College, established by the Baptists, and Davidson, a Presbyterian school, though both abandoned the practice by 1841. The Episcopal Church felt the need for the instruction in practical living skills, as well as classical training. Thus, Valle Crucis Mission's goals of a model farm and an agricultural and industrial school fell well within the mainstream of educational theories and progressive farming innovations of the day.<sup>15</sup>

Through the years the mission at Valle Crucis depended upon its farm to feed the faculty and students and to provide financial support for the school. Yet the mission of the school was also to educate its students in the innovative agricultural practices of the day. Agriculture was the main source of North Carolina's economy from the founding of the state, and remained so until the last quarter of the nineteenth century, when the change to a free labor force and the rise of tenant farming led to an agricultural depression in the state. During the 1880s, concern over the plight of the farmer led to the formation of the North Carolina Farmer's Association and later the National Farmers' Alliance. Members of these groups became active in the politics of the state and eventually gained a voice in the legislature. The Progressive Farmer, published in Raleigh, N. C., also became a voice for the agricultural community, promoting diversification, scientific farming techniques, and improvements in transportation and storage for harvests. An indication of the impact of the farmers' new voice in government, the legislature chartered North Carolina College of Agriculture and Mechanical Arts to provide a practical education for those involved in agriculture; the school opened in 1889.<sup>16</sup>

The need to diversify crops was a main issue for farmers in North Carolina during this period. In the nineteenth century, corn was the predominant crop in western North Carolina, followed

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<sup>15</sup>Boyd, pp. 358-369.

<sup>16</sup>Powell, pp. 309-10; 416-18; 422-8.

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by wheat. Once the railroad came to these western counties and crops could be easily transported to other regions, Watauga County began to grow surpluses of vegetables, such as cabbage and potatoes, to ship out of the county. Apple and cherry orchards became a profitable crop. By the 1890s, Watauga County ranked fourth in cattle production. Timber became a profitable commodity once the railroad arrived as well, and wholesale foresting began in the western counties, many of which had virgin stands of timber.<sup>17</sup>

The religious impact of the Valle Crucis Episcopal Mission, begun in 1844, directly influenced the subsequent establishment of the Episcopal Church in the valley and its growth into the twentieth century. The Church of the Holy Cross and the Valle Crucis Chapel provided religious instruction and fellowship for the school and the people of the valley; the chapel served the students until the school closed in 1942. Church of the Holy Cross, Valle Crucis, remained an organized mission of the Diocese of Western North Carolina even after the school was disbanded and today has a thriving congregation.

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<sup>17</sup>Ina W. Van Noppen and John J. Van Noppen, Western North Carolina Since the Civil War, (Boone: Appalachian Consortium Press, 1973), pp. 269-276.

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### Historical Background

The isolation of mountain life in western North Carolina during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries becomes a central theme around which the development of the mission center at Valle Crucis revolves. Travel in those parts was described by the Methodist Bishop, Francis Asbury in 1805.

Now I know what Mill's Gap is, between Buncombe and Rutherford, one of the descents is like the roof of a house, for nearly a mile. I rode, I walked, I sweat, I trembled, and my old knees failed! Here are gullies and rocks and precipices ... bad is the best! ... Eight times within nine years have I crossed these Alps!<sup>18</sup>

This isolation and difficulty of travel allowed infrequent interaction with the world outside the mountain valleys such as Valle Crucis. The establishment of institutions such as the Valle Crucis Mission opened new opportunities for the people of the area.

In 1844, Bishop Levi Silliman Ives purchased a farm in the Watauga Valley at Valle Crucis which was intended for the mission. At that time the farm contained a log cabin, a grist mill, a tannery, and one hundred and twenty-five acres of level land, one third of which was under cultivation.<sup>19</sup> This land was in the valley along the banks of Dutch Creek and became the site of the first buildings erected at the mission. Historical land use patterns remain, for much of the original acreage is now owned by Valle Crucis and remains agricultural in nature, as it was when purchased in 1844.

The first buildings erected at the mission, between 1844 and 1846, were a saw mill, a log kitchen, an adobe dining room, a log dwelling containing four rooms, and a sixty-by-twenty foot frame building containing a large classroom and two dwelling compartments for teachers on the first floor, and a dormitory for the male students of the school on the second. The basement of

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<sup>18</sup>Episcopal Churchwomen, Diocese of North Carolina, "Early Western North Carolina," in The Highland Churchwoman, vol. 1, no. 1, 1984, p. 1.

<sup>19</sup>Cooper, p. 17; Haywood, p. 110.

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this building, made of brick, contained a chapel. They built new mills to replace the old ones, a large frame barn and blacksmith shop, a two-story house of handmade bricks measuring twenty-six by eighteen feet with a cellar, and several other log dwelling houses. The older students were allowed to build cabins in the groves of trees near the school where they could study and sleep.<sup>20</sup>

The first rector of Valle Crucis Mission was Rev. William Thurston, who died in 1846, shortly after the school opened. He was succeeded by Rev. Henry H. Prout, who became head of the mission, and Rev. Jarvis Buxton, who superintended the school. In 1848, a seminary was established at Valle Crucis which was intended to be "a nursery of a future ministry" of the Episcopal Church in western North Carolina. This seminary of brief duration, for it was closed by 1851, succeeded in training eight ministers, three of whom were ordained at the mission and all of whom were instrumental in the spread of this denomination in the western part of the state.<sup>21</sup>

The seminary at Valle Crucis was the first monastic community in Anglicism since the Reformation. Bishop Ives was a High Churchman, which meant that he espoused the "reintroduction of Anglicanism of practices, rituals, and theological ideas which . . . had . . . been discarded during the English Reformation." The Low Churchmen vehemently resisted these practices and the idea that the Episcopal Church should emphasize their Catholic past and ties. The diocese in North Carolina was a High Church diocese for the early years of Ives's career there, but by the 1840s, the Low Churchmen had a voice in the diocese and controversy arose regarding the bishop's theology. This controversy ultimately led to the closing of the seminary at Valle Crucis and the end of an Anglican experiment in monasticism.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup>Haywood, pp. 110-111; Cooper, pp. 18, 39.

<sup>21</sup>Haywood, pp. 111-2; Sill, p. 33; Centennial Convention, Sketches of Church History in North Carolina, Addresses and Papers by Clergymen of the Dioceses of North and East Carolina, (Wilmington: William L. De Rossett, Jr., 1892), p. 318.

<sup>22</sup>William S. Powell, Dictionary of North Carolina Biography, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1988), pp. 256-7.

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Bishop Ives left the country in 1852 and moved to Rome, Italy, where he converted to Catholicism. At that time, the land owned by the mission was lost to the church. Originally, Bishop Ives purchased the land upon which the mission was founded and he personally held the deeds to the land, which eventually totalled around 2,000 acres, but deeds for this land are said to have never been recorded and have not been located to date. The land was never vested in the church and when Ives left the country, his representatives sold the land to Robert Miller, who farmed it.<sup>23</sup> Miller allowed Brother Skiles, a deacon at the mission who had been called there as the farm manager, to remain on the property and continue his mission work.<sup>24</sup>

After Ives's departure, the missionary work at Valle Crucis continued under Rev. Prout, who went to St. James Episcopal Church in Lenior in 1853, and Mr. William Skiles. Skiles, who had some medical training, was the lone source of medical help in the area surrounding Valle Crucis. Skiles remained at the Valle Crucis property for ten years after the closing of the seminary. He labored among the people of the valley as the lone missionary, though George Evans assisted him with his work during a part of this time. Skiles reported to the Episcopalian Convention during the years from 1853 to 1860 that he ministered at Lower Watauga, Easter Chapel [Upper Watauga], Cranberry Forge, Linville, Bottoms of Elk, Jefferson, and Boon[e]. The school for local children remained open under Skiles's direction. Skiles, one of the few literate adults in the neighborhood, became an important resource for legal advice, farming techniques, and matters relating to raising and buying stock. He occasionally served as arbitrator in neighborhood disputes. He was responsible for the erection of St. John the Baptist Episcopal Church near the Watauga River in the Valle Crucis community. This man who became a true community resource died in 1862, much mourned by those whose lives he had touched.<sup>25</sup>

There is little record of the Episcopal Church's work in

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<sup>23</sup>According to tradition, one corner marker of Ives' land was the large oak tree which presently stands in the valley near the old dairy barn and former apple barn on land owned by the Episcopal Diocese at Valle Crucis.

<sup>24</sup>Cooper, pp. 99-100; Sill, p. 9.

<sup>25</sup>Cooper, p. 63, 99-141; Sill, p. 9, 33.

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Ashe and Watauga Counties during the Civil War. The active record resumes in 1871, when a deacon, referred to as Rev. Mr. Bell, was living at Valle Crucis. Bell was the missionary for Watauga and Mitchell counties in the 1870s and though he moved to a post in Asheville, he continued to make visits to Valle Crucis through 1885. Afterwards occasional services were held at Valle Crucis by Rev. E. P. Green and later by Dr. George B. Wetmore.<sup>26</sup>

By 1875, the Diocese of North Carolina acquired 162 acres in Watauga County on "Mast's Mill Creek" (probably Craborchard Creek). This represents the earliest attempt to re-establish land ownership for the mission at Valle Crucis after the loss of title to the land following Bishop Ives's 1852 departure from the country.<sup>27</sup>

The decades of the 1880s and 1890s were a time of extensive growth in the Episcopal Church. During this period fifty-eight new churches were built in the state and in 1895 the western part of North Carolina was designated a missionary district. Renewed interest was taken in rebuilding Valle Crucis and reviving an active program there. Bishop Cheshire and Rev. Milnor Jones surveyed the situation at Valle Crucis in 1893 and found no habitable buildings remaining from the earlier era of the mission. Bishop Cheshire reported to the convention that he had purchased fifteen acres of the former mission lands in c. 1893, though no deed has been found to substantiate this. The deed for Bishop Cheshire's 1897 acquisition of 5 acres "known as the old Valle Crucis Mission property" is registered at the Watauga County Court House.<sup>28</sup> Bishop Horner, the first elected missionary Bishop of the Jurisdiction of Asheville (elected 1898), followed Cheshire's lead as a proponent of the church's industrial schools and did much to aid in the development of Valle Crucis.<sup>29</sup>

In 1896, the building campaign started with the construction of the Mission House. Built under the direction of Rev. Milnor

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<sup>26</sup>Sill, pp. 33-5.

<sup>27</sup>Watauga County Deeds, vol. F, pp. 227-8, Watauga County Court House, Boone, N.C.

<sup>28</sup>Watauga County Deeds, vol. T, pp. 153-4.

<sup>29</sup>London, pp. 294-5; Sill, p. 94.

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Jones, this house was to shelter a missionary, a teacher, and several students. The school was active once again; in 1898 the school reported forty-eight pupils and two teachers. Bishop Horner wrote of the opportunity before them at Valle Crucis and the other three diocesan boarding schools:

The educational interests of the district must not be neglected. We have an open door, as it were, in many parts of these mountains, and within a few years it may be closed. The children are without educational facilities in many places, and will never realize their need unless they are taught by someone going in from without.<sup>30</sup>

Rev. Samuel F. Adams and Rev. Jones carried on the work until 1898, when John C. Seagle took charge. In 1900, Rev. Marshall G. Ledford became missionary in charge of Valle Crucis; he was succeeded by the appointment of Rev. William R. Savage and Rev. William H. Hardin, with Hugh A. Dobbin as treasurer. In 1902, the Episcopal Missionary District of Asheville acquired the bulk of the land presently owned by the Valle Crucis Mission Center. This 525 acres bought by the Diocese from the estate of James P. Taylor was known as "a part of the old Valle Crucis Farm."<sup>31</sup> In 1903, the mission bought ten additional acres and in 1904, they dedicated a new building which housed dormitory rooms, an assembly hall, three classrooms, a dining room and kitchen. This new building stood on the hill on the site of the old Valle Crucis school house. Known locally as the Auxiliary Hall, and more formally as Holy Cross Industrial School, it burned in 1919 and was replaced by "The Annex," which was built on the same spot.<sup>32</sup>

By 1907, Hugh Dobbin had been ordained a priest and in 1909 he took charge of Valle Crucis, assisted by the former director, Rev. Savage. Savage and Dobbin formed the Valle Crucis Associate

<sup>30</sup>Whisenhunt, p. 15; Sill, p. 96.

<sup>31</sup>Watauga County Deeds, vol. 1, pp. 592-6.

<sup>32</sup>Sill, pp. 95-8; Watauga County Deed, Book 1, p. 592; The Valle Crucis Associate Mission, "Historic Valle Crucis," n.p., c. 1906; Watauga County Deeds, vol. 2, pp. 65-6.

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Mission, thus the mission became the center of an even wider mission field in Watauga and Ashe Counties.<sup>33</sup>

The school grew in size during these years as well. Eighty-two attended the Sunday School in 1911 and ninety-nine students attended the Agricultural and Industrial School, forty-five of whom were boarding students. The school consisted of primary, grammar, and high school classes and provided industrial training in "kitchen, laundry, house work ... [and] native weaving." The staff was composed of the chaplain, principal, and five academic and two industrial teachers. Though the names of all of the early teachers are not known, Lucy Capehart, Ellen Tongue, and Lou Taylor were a few of those who taught at Valle Crucis during this period of renewed growth. At this time the residential student body was all-female, and boys attended as day students.<sup>34</sup>

In the minutes of the Episcopal Convention for 1911, it is noted that the trustees of the diocese had loaned \$14,000 to the Valle Crucis School "to pay off obligations incurred in erecting buildings and equipping that school." By 1911, twelve additional acres had been acquired by the mission and Auchmuty Hall, the large dormitory building, had been erected. The chapel had been built. An apple orchard had been planted and the farm established, on which there was a blacksmith shop, a saw mill, and a wagon factory. A herd of dairy cattle had been bought and a cheese plant established. The school was valued at \$45,000 in 1911.<sup>35</sup>

The Reverends Floyd W. Thompkins and Lee Frontis Anthony served at Valle Crucis between 1911 and 1919. Rev. Anthony summed up the ethics behind the Valle Crucis mission in 1918:

We, people of the hills, have lived such exclusive and separate lives for so long that we find much difficulty in learning to work together. It is hard, very hard, to

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<sup>33</sup>Sill, p. 96.

<sup>34</sup>Sill, p. 96.

<sup>35</sup>Sill, p. 97; Whisenhunt, p. 16; Missionary District of Asheville, Minutes of the Seventeenth Annual Convention of the Missionary District of Asheville, (Asheville: Hackney & Moale Co., 1911), pp. 29, 118-8; Watauga County Deeds, vol. 13, pp. 151-2.

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understand the Church and to appreciate her life and teaching unless we have learned in our home and community the lesson of cooperation ... It is our business to teach it in our rural districts, where the people have not had the opportunity of knowing or realizing its value. That has been done here for some years past, and, as a result, it is making for a very helpful influence throughout this whole community.<sup>36</sup>

The school at Valle Crucis during these years provided classes from the first grade through high school. Students could earn the money to pay their tuition by working on the school's farm. They received academic courses, as well as classes in kitchen management, laundering, housework, weaving, farming, woodworking, blacksmithing, and wagon making.<sup>37</sup>

The agricultural school at Valle Crucis had embraced practical education in agriculture since its inception in 1844. When the school was revived in 1896, it was in the mainstream of progress in agriculture. In recognition of the need to diversify crops, the mission school planted a vast apple orchard in the valley and at the base of Valle Mountain. The school purchased a herd of fine dairy cattle and built a dairy barn. The timber on Valle Mountain was partially cleared in the early years of the twentieth century. The students were taught agricultural techniques which they took back to their homes, and in this way the school of agriculture had a far-reaching impact on the area.

The school was also a leader in the promotion of new technology. Valle Crucis Mission School achieved a first in Watauga County's history when they harnessed the water power of Craborchard Creek to produce the county's first electric light plant sometime between 1903 and c. 1930. A poured concrete dam was erected at the crest of Valle Mountain where the creek plunged down a cascading waterfall to the foot of the mountain. The water was directed from a valve in the dam through a wooden race which descended the mountain to a water powered generator. The dam and generator supplied Valle Crucis with electricity

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<sup>36</sup>Sill, p. 98.

<sup>37</sup>London, p. 476.

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until it was destroyed in the flood of 1940.<sup>38</sup>

In the mid-1920s the Diocese of Western North Carolina utilized the mission in the summer months to conduct a school of religious education for the lay people of the church in both of the Carolinas. The 1924 bulletin of the school provides the first indication of Valle Crucis being used by large groups for educational retreats. The flyer stressed that the mission was accessible by automobile.<sup>39</sup>

The school was under the leadership of Rev. James P. Burke from 1923 to 1928. During the 1930s, when the religious sector looked with grave concern at the changes wrought in American society during the 1920s, Valle Crucis seemed a haven for the nurturing of children. Rev. Leicester Kent, the rector at Valle Crucis beginning in 1929, expressed these fears in a promotional letter in 1930:

. . . the forces opposing Christianity were now organized as solidly, if not more so, throughout the civilized world than the church itself . . . When one considers that girls have the opportunity of entering the Valle Crucis School and receiving the benefit of a splendid Christian home and academic training that cannot be surpassed anywhere and to develop into splendid Christian women, it no longer resolves itself into dollars and cents . . .<sup>40</sup>

Rev. Kent went on to state that in 1930 the school had twenty-seven boarding pupils and an active body of day students. By that year, the Valle Crucis School was an accredited high school.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>38</sup>Ibid.

<sup>39</sup>Valle Crucis, "The Valle Crucis Summer School for Religious Education," n.p., 1924.

<sup>40</sup>Rev. Leicester F. Kent, "Valle Crucis School for Girls, Valle Crucis, N.C." n.p., June, 1930.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid.

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In 1934, the orchard and farm were showing a small profit, yet more importantly they were providing employment for the students. Considering the fact that the country was in the midst of the Depression, the school did remarkably well, ending the year with a balanced budget.<sup>42</sup>

During the late 1930s and early 1940s, the school retained the industrial school structure under the direction of Mrs. Emily Toll Hopkins, a native of Missouri and a Wellesley graduate. The enrollment leveled off at around one hundred students during the 1930s and the school was free from debt. The physical plant continued to be improved as finances permitted. The school's sale of small parcels of its acreage during the 1930s perhaps allowed it to improve the facilities.<sup>43</sup>

World War II and its effects upon the American economy forced the closing of the school at Valle Crucis in 1943, the main reasons being the gasoline shortage, low enrollment, and lack of money. In 1943, the trustees of the diocese entered the following resolution into the minutes of the convention:

... that the present suspension of the academic work at Valle Crucis due to the existing emergency conditions is in no sense that Valle Crucis Industrial School shall cease to exist, but it is purely a temporary measure, and that the said institution continues to exist and is continuing to render services most helpful and essential during these disturbed and critical times of war.

The caretaker of the school stayed on at Valle Crucis to maintain the farm and buildings. Valle Crucis' role as a central place in the lives of the people of the valley continued, for the caretaker's wife was a registered nurse and social worker and was

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<sup>42</sup>Diocese of Western North Carolina, Journal of the Twelfth Annual Convention, (Hendersonville: Flanagan Printing Co., 1934), pp. 87-9.

<sup>43</sup>Diocese of Western North Carolina, Journal of the Fifteenth Annual Convention, (n.p., 1937), pp. 47, 50, 65; "Valle Crucis and a Mountain Crusade," in The News and Observer, March 12, 1939.

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the only source of medical attention in the area, the closest doctor being eleven miles away at Boone. The mission continued to provide a religious center for its communicants throughout the war. When the Valle Crucis School temporarily closed in 1943, it signified the end of an era, encompassing nearly a century, during which this mission provided an educational, religious, and social focal point for this community in the mountains of western North Carolina.<sup>44</sup>

In 1946, the Diocese of Western North Carolina made the property available to the Southern Parish Training Program, which operated a program there in conjunction with the National Council of the Episcopal Church. By 1948, the Southern Rural Church Institute had its offices at Valle Crucis. Candidates for the priesthood attended the summer institute where they received training and were then sent to work in Episcopal churches in the area. Under this program, the candidates conducted summer Bible Schools, community recreation programs, paid visits to parishoners, and preached.<sup>45</sup>

From the late 1940s until the mid-1960s, ministerial candidates continued to be trained at Valle Crucis in the summer. After the ministerial candidates left for their mission field, the dormitories, known as "The Valle Crucis Inn," accommodated summer guests.<sup>46</sup> As more and more groups used Valle Crucis for their conferences and retreats, it became known as the Valle Crucis Conference Center, which name it retains to the present. It continues to operate under the auspices of the Episcopal Diocese of Western North Carolina.

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<sup>44</sup>Diocese of Western North Carolina, Journal of the Twenty-first Annual Convention, (n.p., 1943), pp. 58-9.

<sup>45</sup>Letter of Rev. E. Dargan Butt to Rev. Charles G. Leavell, November 27, 1948, collection of the Episcopal Diocese of Western North Carolina, Black Mountain, N. C.; "Valle Crucis Conference in North Carolina Opens to Vacationing Episcopalians," in The Palm Branch, c. 1964.

<sup>46</sup>"Valle Crucis Conference in North Carolina ..."

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Valle Crucis Episcopal Mission  
Watauga Co., N. C.

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Verbal Boundary Description: All that parcel owned by the Episcopal Diocese of Western North Carolina as taken from the 1965 plat of the property in Watauga County Plat Book 3, p.151 and shown on the accompanying USGS map with the exception of 10.6 acres containing a cluster of non-contributing resources.

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- Boundary Justification: The 426.9 acre tract which is delineated by the above UTM's and boundary description is the remaining portion of the 525 acre tract purchased for Valle Crucis Mission in 1903 and deeded to the Episcopal Church with the exception of a tract of 10.6 acres at the northwestern edge which is excluded because it contains non-contributing resources. This property includes most or all of the property upon which the first mission buildings were erected in 1845 by Bishop Levi Silliman Ives, as well as the Mission House built in 1896 as the church's interest in the mission increased under Bishop Cheshire's administration. The acreage is as important to the district as are the buildings, for the school has been inextricably tied to this orchard, timber, and farm land throughout its history. This historical landscape remains intact and is a valuable cultural resource, as are the Valle Crucis buildings.

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Valle Crucis Episcopal Mission  
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Key: Enlargement Photos, Valle Crucis Episcopal Mission  
Watauga Co., N. C.

All negatives are at the North Carolina Historic Preservation  
Office. NC Division of Archives and History, Raleigh, NC

All photographs were taken by Katherine H. Richardson in October,  
1991, with the exception of the two documentaries which were  
copied from the originals at the Valle Crucis Conference Center.

- A. Auchmuty Hall, facing NE.
- B. The Annex, facing N.
- C. Valle Crucis Episcopal Mission, 1913, from a postcard, facing  
NW.
- D. Church of the Holy Cross, facing SE.
- E. Bishop Ives House, facing NW.
- F. "The Farm House," c. 1924, facing NW.
- G. "The Farm House, 1992, facing NW.
- H. The porch, Auchmuty Hall, facing W.
- I. Parlor, Auchmuty Hall, facing NW.
- J. "The Apple Barn: and "The Bunk House" with the Mission House  
in background, facing NW.
- K. The Old Chapel, facing N.
- L. The Field, c. 1920, facing E.
- M. The Rectory, facing E.
- N. View of fields looking southeast from cemetery.

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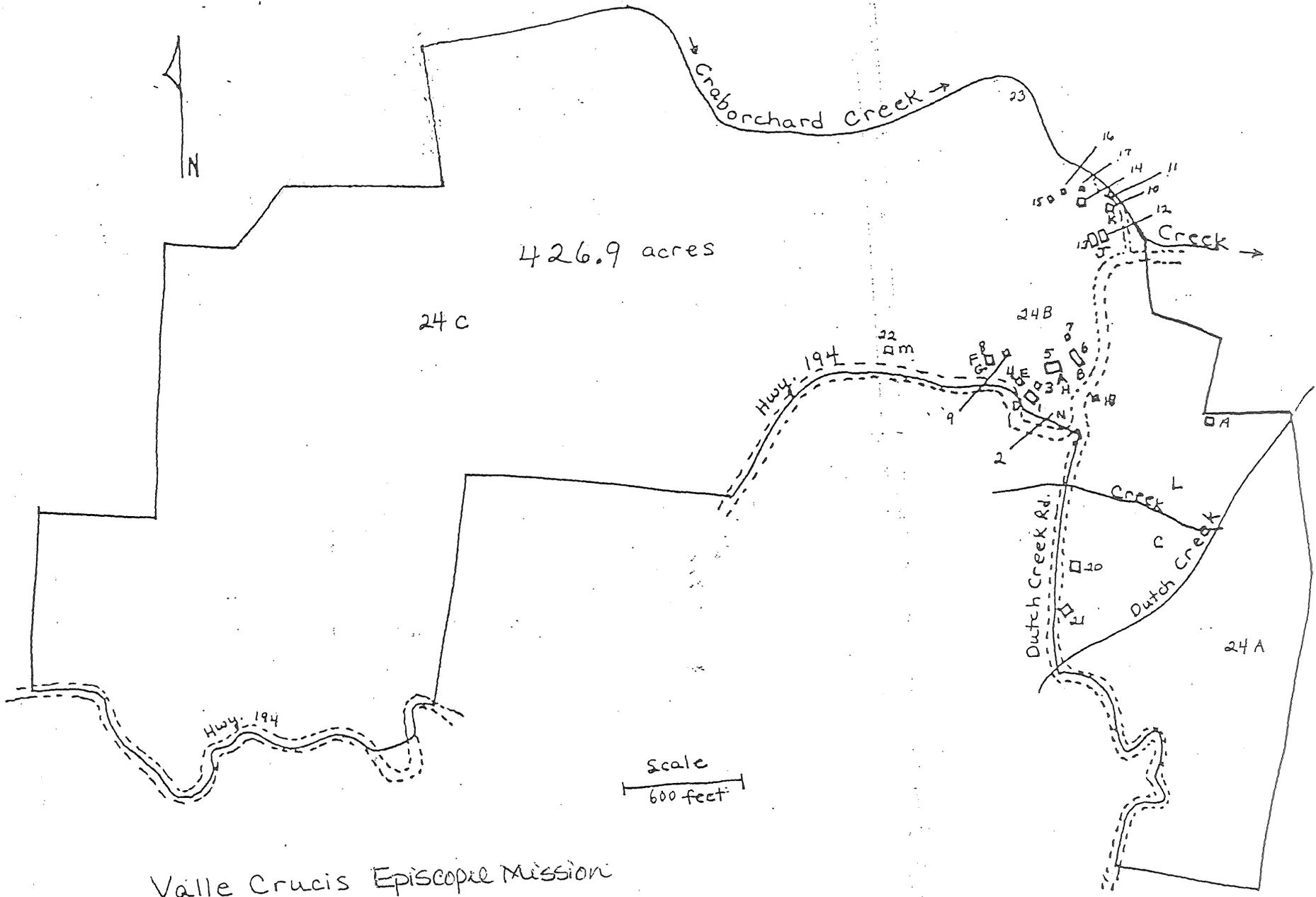
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Watauga Co., N. C.

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Key to Site Map:

1. Church of the Holy Cross. Contributing.
2. The Cemetery, Church of the Holy Cross. Contributing.
3. Skiles Hall. Non-contributing.
4. Bishop Ives House. Non-contributing.
5. Auchmuty Hall. Contributing.
6. The Annex. Contributing.
7. Garbage Pen. Non-contributing.
8. "The Farm House." Contributing.
9. Garage. Non-contributing.
10. Former Chapel. Non-contributing.
11. Shed. Non-contributing.
12. Former Dairy Barn (Now "The Apple Barn.") Contributing.
13. Former Apple Barn (Now "The Bunk House.") Contributing.
14. The Mission House. Contributing.
15. Shed. Non-contributing.
16. Shed. Non-contributing.
17. Shed. Non-contributing.
18. Garage. Non-contributing.
19. Hay Barn No. 1. Non-contributing.
20. Hay Barn No. 2. Non-contributing.
21. "The Rector's House." Non-contributing.
22. "The Rectory." Non-contributing.
23. The Power Dam. Contributing.
24. The Landscape. Contributing.
  - A. The Valley/Field
  - B. The Apple Orchard
  - C. The Mountain Acreage



426.9 acres

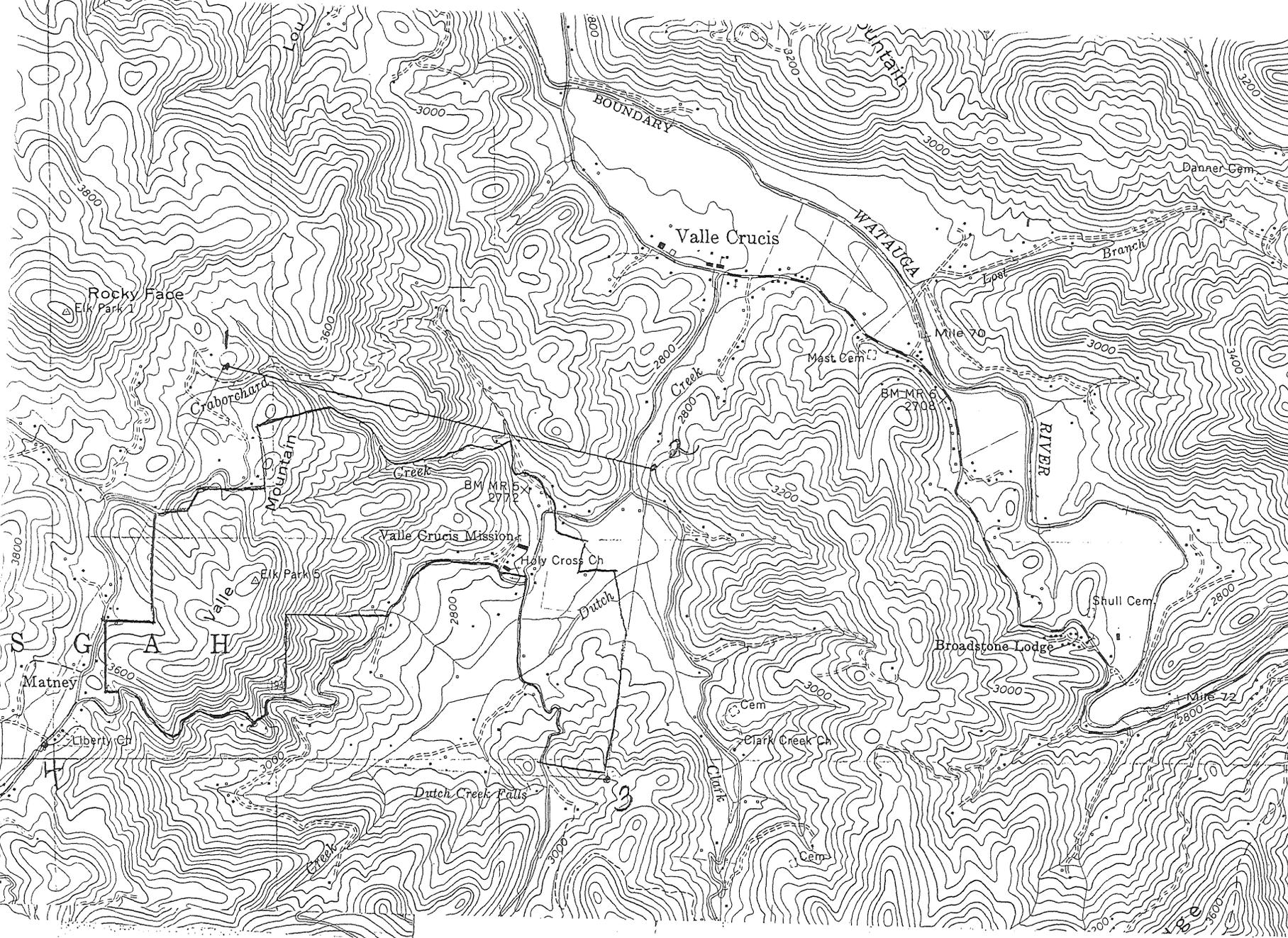
24 C

24 B

24 A

Scale  
600 feet

Valle Crucis Episcopal Mission  
Watauga Co., N.C.



4008

12'30"

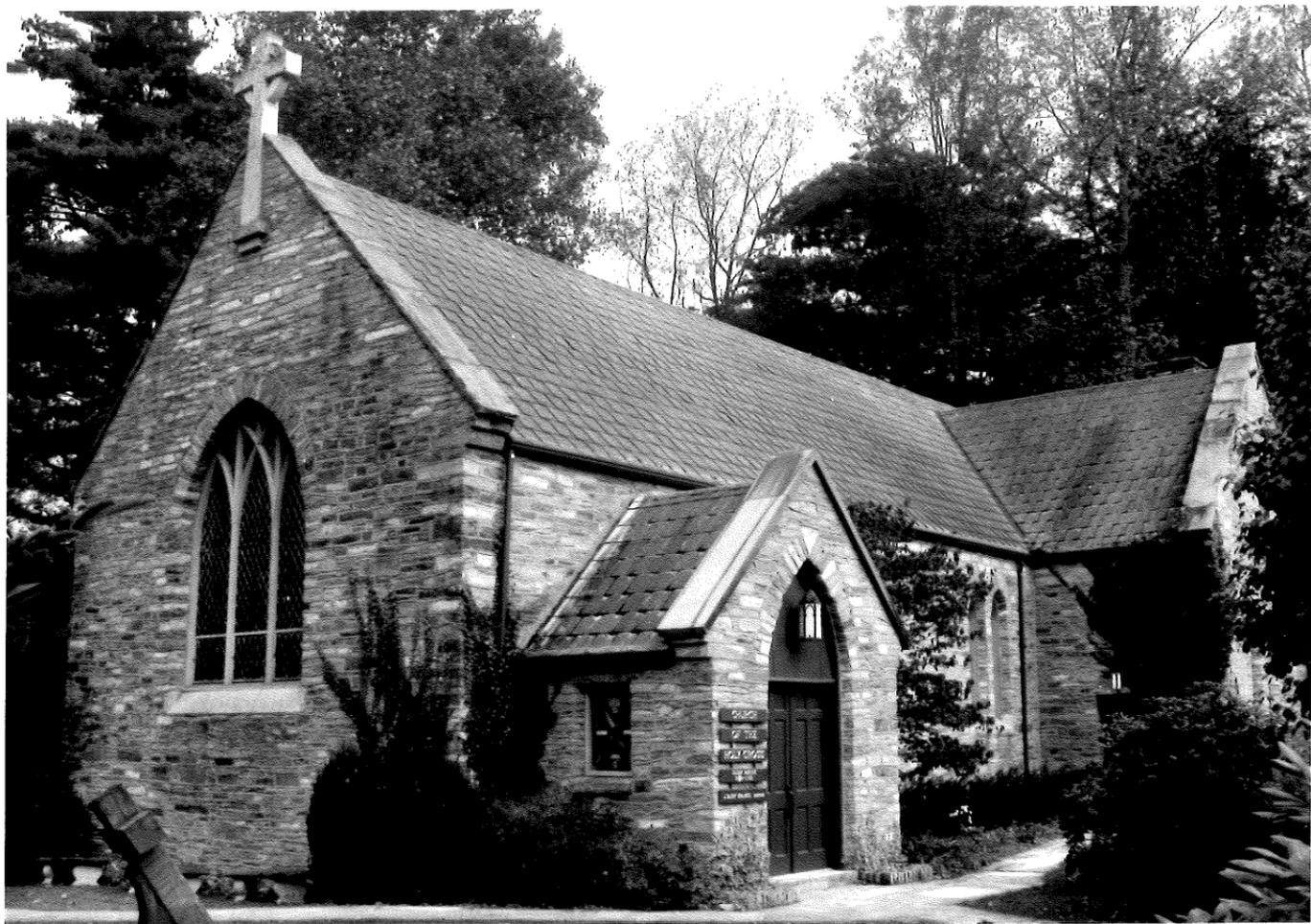
4007

Valle Crucis  
 Episcopal Mission  
 Valle Crucis via  
 Watauga Co., NC  
 Quad: Valle Crucis  
 with Reference

1. 17/427790  
400678
2. 17/429710  
4006330
3. 17/429490  
400494
4. 17/42694  
40050

(BOONE 221-NW)  
4656 II NW





CHURCH  
OF THE  
HOLY CROSS  
1850  
1851  
1852  
1853  
1854