

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 Episcopal Church

other names/site number The Rock Church

### 2. Location

street & number 604 Morgan Road

N/A not for publication

city, town Eden

N/A vicinity

state North Carolina code NC

county Rockingham

code 157

zip code 27288

### 3. Classification

Ownership of Property

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

Category of Property

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

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing
<u>1</u>	_____ buildings
_____	_____ sites
_____	_____ structures
_____	_____ objects
<u>1</u>	_____ Total

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  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.  See continuation sheet.

Signature of certifying official

William S. Fair Jr.  
State Historic Preservation Officer

Date

1-30-89

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.  See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

### 5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register.  See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register.  See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register.
- removed from the National Register.
- other, (explain:)

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Religion: Religious Structure

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Religion: Religious Structure

7. Description

Architectural Classification (enter categories from instructions)

Other: Mission Gothic

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Sandstone

walls Sandstone

roof Asphalt

other Wood

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

St. Luke's Episcopal Church, located in the Spray section of Eden, North Carolina, is an example of the mission Gothic Revival style of architecture rendered in materials native to the region in which it is located. Completed in 1926, it is constructed of flintstone; its solid masonry walls are one story high and the rectangular sanctuary is covered by a gabled roof and that is intersected by gabled transepts. The major (west) facade rises to a tall gable end and is accented by a pointed arch tracery stained glass window. A three-stage crenellated tower on the southwest corner of the main facade houses pointed arch entries to the building in its south and west facades and the side walls of the sanctuary and the gable ends of the transepts feature small pointed arch windows filled with mottled amber glass in a diamond pane design. The interior of the sanctuary is finished with native stone walls and the wood of vaulted roof, exposed beams, window frames, floor and reredos and altar rails is chestnut taken from the nearby mountains of Virginia. In 1950, a two story cinder block parish house was added to the north of the sanctuary and is connected to it at the north transept wall. The original 1926 St. Luke's Episcopal Church is the work of J.W. Hopper, a local architect, and presents a picturesque appearance as one views it from the V-shaped intersection of Aiken Street and Morgan Road in which it is located. The church and the 1950 Parish House occupy the greater part of the lot on which they are sited; the buildings and the lot are being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places.

St. Luke's Episcopal Church is an unadorned solid masonry wall building reminiscent of the medieval parish church of England. The stone used in the construction of the church was collected by parishioners from farmers' fields in the nearby Axton and Cascade areas of Virginia. The rectangular sanctuary and transepts rest on a raised foundation marked by a water table and the walls rise directly to the overhang of the gabled roofs. The main (west) facade and the rear (east) facade are solid masonry gable end walls into which the roof abuts and they each

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 2

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feature a large pointed arch stained glass window divided by wooden tracery into three sections. The side walls of the sanctuary and the gable end walls of the transepts feature small pointed arch windows filled with mottled amber glass set in a small diamond-pane design.

The unaltered interior of the church is gained through pointed arch entrances in the south and west walls of the three-stage square crenellated tower that rises above the southwest corner of the sanctuary. The second stage of the tower is defined by single pointed arch openings in the south and west walls and above those in the third stage are small paired pointed arch windows. The interior of the church presents an elegantly simple appearance rendered in rock walls and chestnut wood appointments. The vaulted ceiling with its exposed beams are of chestnut that matches the other interior wooden appointments. The Gothic design of the building is echoed in the simple tracery relief of the reredos and panels and in the supports of the altar rails. The arrangement of the interior is based on the Episcopalian altar-oriented form of worship.

The two story cinder block parish house to the north of the sanctuary was constructed in 1950. It is a rectangular block connected to the north transept of the sanctuary by an ell and is covered by a gable roof. The interior is institutional in nature; it was renovated in the 1970s and contains classrooms, a lounge, two offices and rest-rooms on the first floor and a large hall and a kitchen, classrooms, small restrooms and lounge on the second.

The 1926 St. Luke's Episcopal Church retains its original integrity and the parish house addition does little to detract from that. The "Rock Church" as it is sometimes called, dominates its site in the Spray section of Eden and stands as a reminder of the durability of the Gothic Revival design as it is simply interpreted in indigenous building materials.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 3

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(This Section Seven: Physical Description is taken in part from a description prepared by Claudia Roberts Brown that appears in A Tale of Three Cities published by the Eden Historic Properties Commission, 1986).

8. Statement of Significance

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

nationally  statewide  locally

Applicable National Register Criteria  A  B  C  D

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

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Social History

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Period of Significance

1926-1941

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Significant Dates

1926

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Significant Person

Gordon, William Jones

Architect/Builder

Hopper, J.W.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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

Summary Paragraph:

St. Luke's Episcopal Church in the Spray section of Eden, North Carolina, is equally important for its local architectural significance (criterion C for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places), and for its association with the Rev. William Jones Gordon, Rector of the church and an evangelical who ministered to the spiritual needs of his congregation while, in the tradition of active clergy and lay-people, he promoted social reform among them during the early years of the twentieth century (criterion B for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places). The church building is a tangible reminder of the ministry of the Rev. Mr. Gordon who represents the mission spirit in the Episcopal Church at the turn of the century in North Carolina. St. Luke's began as a Sunday School in 1906 and evolved eventually into a parish church. Its simple Gothic design is the work of J. W. Hopper, a local architect and son of J.M Hopper, a contractor who erected many buildings in the northern Piedmont counties of the state. Events surrounding the founding of the church in the early years of this century and those related to the construction of the native rock and wood sanctuary in 1926 reflect the relationships of the Morehead family, industrial magnates of the Piedmont, to the workers who labored in their mills and factories.

Architectural Context:

While unique in Eden, this early twentieth century mission Gothic style of ecclesiastic architecture is relatively common in North Carolina, especially in the mountains where such mission churches were built by the Episcopal Church in many communities. St. Luke's Episcopal Church was designed by a local architect, J.W. Hopper, who was known for his Anglophilia, and was lovingly constructed of native materials

See continuation sheet

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 8 Page 2

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by the members of the congregation. The land on which the church is sited was donated to the congregation by local textile mill owners and because of this the building is a symbol of the complex relationships that existed between management and workers in the early twentieth century industrial towns in North Carolina.

Social History Context:

William Jones Gordon (1882-1947) was a native of Wilmington, North Carolina, who was educated at the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill, the Seminary of the South in Sewanee, Tennessee, and the Episcopal Theological Seminary in Cambridge, Massachusetts. As a young man, he joined the Student Volunteer Movement, an organization that encouraged young people to become missionaries, and, following his formal education, St. George's Church in New York offered to send him to China, a common destination for Christian missionaries around the turn of the century. However, his overseas ambitions were thwarted and he returned to North Carolina where he was ordained a priest in 1908. (1)

In 1910, the Rev. Mr. Gordon was appointed to the Episcopal ministry in Spray, North Carolina, and during the years prior to World War II, he labored tirelessly to improve the lot of his congregation and fellow citizens. He is revered locally as a selfless individual active in worldly as well as spiritual matters. The early twentieth century mission spirit of the Episcopal church was able to find many outlets in the industrial towns of the time; many such towns were flooded with farming families displaced by a stubborn agricultural depression who were looking for work and who often lived in over-crowded, unhealthy conditions. The system of management at many industrial sites promoted long hours at low pay, child labor and a closed local economic

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number   8   Page   3  

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system.(2) Nationally, in 1890, the wealthiest three percent of the population owned 65 percent of the wealth while the poorest 87 percent owned ten percent.(3) The agricultural depression, together with a growing awareness of the problems of the working class, led to the rise of many social movements. In North Carolina, such conditions were not addressed as much by the prevailing national tendency to organize labor as they were by the owners of industrial facilities to address the needs of workers through local, individualized philanthropic activities such as donating land and money for the establishment of churches as they did with St. Luke's Episcopal Church.(4)

The Rev. Mr. Gordon worked within the context of the economic structure established by the Morehead and Mebane families who owned the textile mills and their supporting facilities in Spray. He is remembered locally as a tireless visitor to the sick, a teacher, an uncritical promoter of sobriety and a defender of the rights of women and children. That he was successful in his ministry is demonstrated by the growth of his church during the difficult economic times before World War II and by the posthumous naming for him of a bridge spanning the Smith River in the Spray section of Eden.(5) The Rev. Mr. Gordon served this church from its construction in 1926 until his death in 1947, but the period during which his leadership was most significant ends in 1941 with the beginning of World War II, the end of the Depression period.

### Historical Background:

The village of Spray began in 1813 around an early textile mill and grew steadily under the influence of the noted industrialist John Motley Morehead (1796-1866) and his descendents. During the 1890s, B. Frank Mebane, husband of Morehead's grand-daughter, Lily, commenced a rapid expansion

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 4

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of the Morehead-Mebane industrial empire that brought an great influx of workers into the Spray community. (See the 1987 Spray Industrial District National Register nomination.) From a village of 300 in the 1860s, the community grew to 3,300 by 1903,(6) and, in an astounding expansion, grew to 6,750 in 1904.(7) In contrast, neighboring Leaksville registered a population of 663 in 1903 and remained stable throughout much of the 1910s.(8) By 1906, it was apparent that there were community needs in the areas of police and fire protection, sanitation and health services that could be provided through a municipal incorporation. Mebane resisted the incorporation of Spray into a municipality; instead he fostered the formation of the Spray Civic Association and through its charter, sought to provide for the health, safety and welfare of the people who came to work in the mills. The population boom also started a period of church building in Spray and Morehead and Mebane were noted for their support of congregations' efforts to establish themselves and build church houses. One of these congregations was St. Luke's Episcopal Church.( 9 )

Although the Episcopal Church was founded early in North Carolina, the denomination was late arriving in the towns on the Dan River. The first Episcopal Congregation in Leaksville was the Church of the Epiphany, established in 1844, some years after other Protestant denominations had rooted in the area.(10) During the early years of the twentieth century, a volunteer from The Church of the Epiphany in Leaksville began to hold Sunday afternoon services for Episcopalians in the adjoining community of Spray.(11) Services were held in the original schoolhouse and, by 1906, the congregation had grown enough to build, with the support of local mill officials, a small frame building on Flint Hill in Spray to house what was designated

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 5

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by church officials as an "Unorganized Mission." Named St. Luke's on Flint Hill, the building served as the sanctuary for the congregation for twenty years.(12)

In 1910, through the interest of Miss Kate Cheshire, an Episcopal missionary in Rockingham County and sister of the Rt. Rev. Joseph Blount Cheshire, Bishop of North Carolina, the Rev. William Jones Gordon arrived in Spray to begin a ministry that was to last for 37 years. The Rev. Mr. Gordon conducted a successful ministry among the mill workers and other citizens of the northern Piedmont community and on Sunday, April 14, 1912, the Rt. Rev. Cheshire signed a document naming the congregation an "Organized Mission." After that, the congregation grew to the point that by the early 1920s, there was a serious need for a larger church house.(13)

This need was met in part by the Spray Water and Power and Land Company and by the Carolina Cotton and Woolen Mills, a subsidiary of Marshall Field and Company, a Chicago merchandising firm that had taken over many of the Morehead-Mebane mills, with their donation of a V-shaped lot at the intersection of Aiken Street and Morgan Road in Spray. A building committee decided that the new church building should be of Gothic design and that it should be built of rock; to this end they secured the services of J.W. Hopper, a local architect and the son of J.M. Hopper, a contractor who was noted for his masonry constructions. The younger Hopper was an Anglophile; his Tudor Revival style house in Leaksville is an academic example, and the church house he designed for the congregation of St. Luke's is romantic rendition of the Medieval parish churches of the English countryside.(14)

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 6

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A local contractor, Jim Chatham, was hired to build the church and stone for the solid masonry construction walls was collected by the members of the congregation from farmers' fields in the nearby Axton and Cascade areas of Virginia. The congregation voted to spend \$500 of the building fund on a truck to haul the rock and they also voted to avoid incurring a debt during the construction of the church. This proscription on debt caused construction on the half-built structure to be halted for a period of ten months while funds were raised to finish it, but the congregation persevered and on February 7, 1926, the first service was held in the new church. In December of that year, Bishop Cheshire consecrated the church and, by 1932, the congregation exceeded 200.<sup>(15)</sup> Throughout the Depression th Rev. Mr. Gordon continued his ministry from what was affectionately known as the "Rock Church" and is remembered in Eden for inspiring his fellow citizens to help each other through the hard years of the 1930s before the local industries were revived with government contracts related to the war efforts of the 1940s.<sup>(16)</sup>

St. Luke's Episcopal Church in Eden, North Carolina, represents the mood of evangelism that founded many churches in North Carolina around the turn of the century. The mission Gothic architecture of the building is a physical reminder of the English roots of the Anglican Church and the Rev. William Jones Gordon, Rector of the church for 37 years represents the proselytizing spirit that marked many successful congregations in the state.

### Footnotes:

- 1: Brown, Claudia Roberts. A Tale of Three Cities, Eden's Heritage: A Pictorial Survey. (Eden Historic Properties Commission, Eden, N.C., 1986). p.p. 10-45

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 7

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- 2: Ibid.
3. Butler, Lindley A. Our Proud Heritage, Rockingham County, North Carolina. (Bassett Printing Corp., Bassett, Va., 1971), p.p.15-16
4. Brown, Claudia Roberts. A Tale of Three Cities, Eden's Heritage: A Pictorial Survey. (Eden Historic Properties Commission, Eden, N.C., 1986). p.p. 10-45
5. Ibid.
6. North Carolina Year Book and Business Directory, 1903. (News and Observer, Raleigh, N.C., 1903). p.492
7. North Carolina Year Book and Business Directory, 1904. (News and Observer, Raleigh, N.C., 1904). p.493
8. Ibid., 1903-1910
9. Brown, Claudia Roberts. A Tale of Three Cities, Eden's Heritage: A Pictorial Survey. (Eden Historic Properties Commission, Eden, N.C., 1986). p.41
10. Butler, Lindley A. Our Proud Heritage, Rockingham County, North Carolina. (Bassett Printing Corp., Bassett, Va., 1971), p.83
11. Ibid.
12. Brown, Claudia Roberts. A Tale of Three Cities, Eden's Heritage: A Pictorial Survey. (Eden Historic Properties Commission, Eden, N.C., 1986). p.158
13. Craddock, Frances G. In The Potter's Hand. (Bassett Printing Corp., Bassett, Va., 1975). p.p.17-21, 25-26
14. Brown, Claudia Roberts. A Tale of Three Cities, Eden's Heritage: A Pictorial Survey. (Eden Historic Properties Commission, Eden, N.C., 1986). p.100 and p.153 and Craddock, Frances G. In The Potter's Hand. (Bassett Printing Corp., Bassett, Va., 1975). p.p.41-42
15. Craddock, Frances G. In The Potter's Hand. (Bassett Printing Corp., Bassett, Va., 1975). p.41-42
16. Ibid. p.p.64-65

9. Major Bibliographical References

Brown, Claudia Roberts. A Tale of Three Cities, Eden's Heritage: A Pictorial Survey. (Eden Historic Properties Commission, Eden, N.C., 1986).
Butler, Lindley A. Our Proud Heritage, Rockingham County, North Carolina. (Bassett Printing Corp., Bassett, Va., 1971)
Craddock, Frances G. In the Potter's Hand. (Bassett Printing Corp., Bassett, Va., 1975).
North Carolina Year Book and Business Directory, 1903. (News and Observer, Raleigh, N.C. 1903).

See continuation sheet

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 Less than one acre

UTM References

A 17 610 9610 40418000
Zone Easting Northing
C

B Zone Easting Northing
D

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The nominated property is outlined in red on the enclosed Rockingham County Tax Map Number 7070.07 Block Number 1, Parcel Number 3970.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

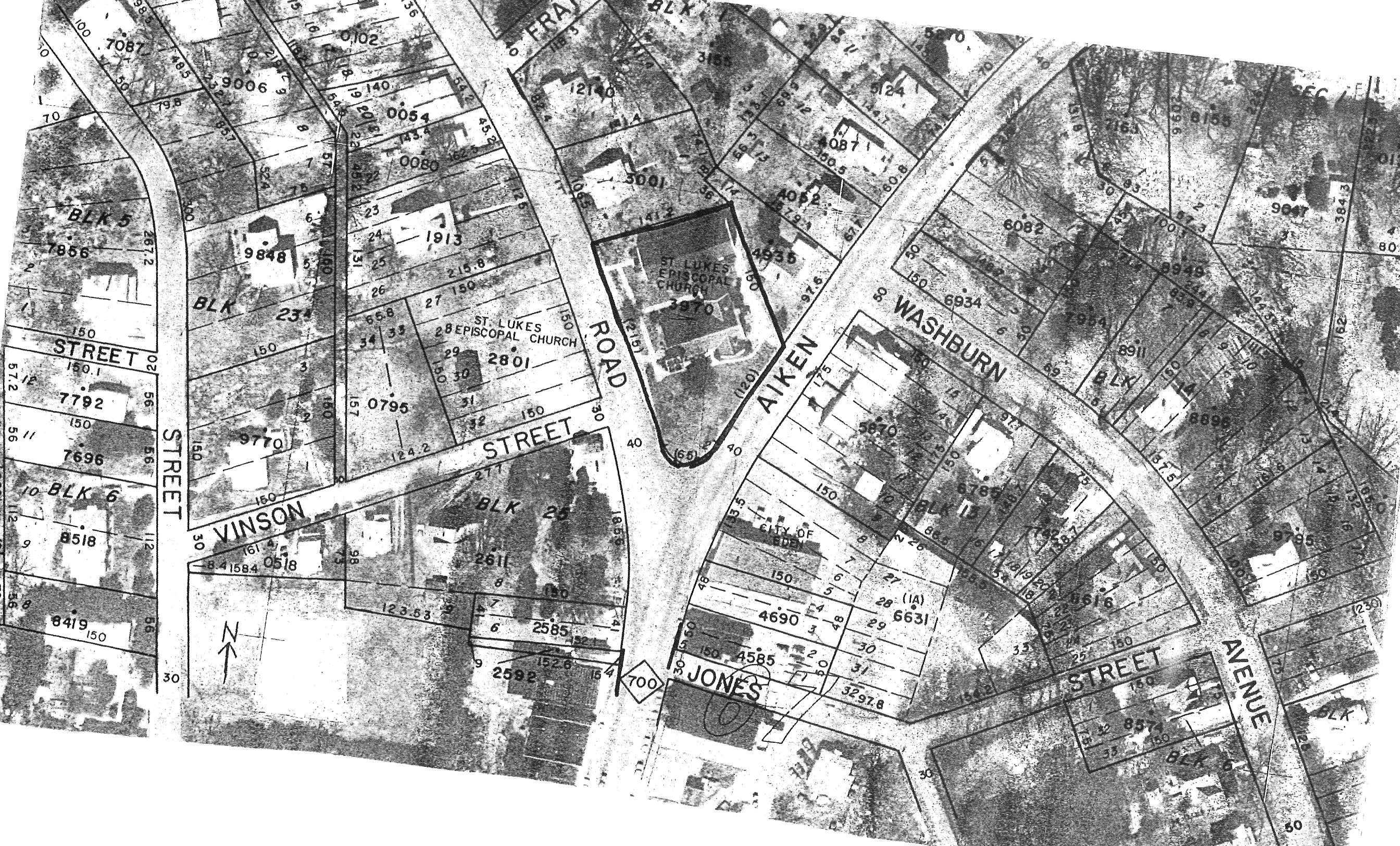
Being the entire parcel historically associated with this church building.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Linda Harris Edmisten date September 1, 1988
organization
street & number 2121 Lake Wheeler Road telephone 919-821-3577
city or town Raleigh state North Carolina zip code 27603





BLK 5

STREET

BLK 6

STREET

VINSON

STREET

BLK 25

ROAD

AIKEN

WASHBURN

JONES

STREET

AVENUE

ST. LUKES  
EPISCOPAL  
CHURCH

CITY OF  
EDEN



700

7087

7856

7792

7696

8518

8419

9848

9770

0518

0054

0080

1913

2801

2611

2585

2592

12140

3001

ST. LUKES  
EPISCOPAL  
CHURCH

2801

2611

2585

2592

12140

3001

ST. LUKES  
EPISCOPAL  
CHURCH

2801

2611

2585

2592

4087

4052

4935

5870

4690

4585

3297.8

WASHBURN

BLK 15

28 (1A)

6631

6082

6934

6780

6616

8574

STREET

BLK 6

9047

8898

9785

BLK

50



WEST

700



St. Luke's  
Episcopal Church