

## **Landmark Nomination Report Jefferson County Historic Landmarks Commission**

### **Elk Branch Church and Academy**

5229 Flowing Springs Rd.  
Shenandoah Junction, WV 25442

#### **Physical Description:**

The Elk Branch Church and Academy are located one-quarter mile north of Duffields train station, and 1.5 miles from Jefferson High School. They are 4.3 miles south of Shepherdstown, on Flowing Springs Road. The church is built of limestone, with walls 20 inches or more thick, and includes a large gallery, see Architectural information below. The Academy is a single story brick structure.

#### **Historic Description:**

Presbyterian clergy have preached at Elk Branch since 1719. In 1768 the church became independent of the Shepherdstown Presbyterian Church. There was no pastor to minister to the congregation, which was largely of German and Scotch-Irish descent, from 1792 to 1833, but the present building was finished in 1829, having cost \$1,047.57. In 1830 John Snyder, Sr., deeded the church lot to John Snyder, Jr., James Burr, John Melvin, Jr., Thomas Melvin, Jr., John William Duffield, and Henry Snyder, to be used for public worship and as a burying ground, and to erect a school house.

During the Civil War the church was occupied by Union troops and also used by them as a hospital in 1862-63. As a result, everything but the walls and roof were destroyed or damaged, and required extensive repairs at the end of hostilities. For a few days following the Battle of Antietam it also served as a Confederate hospital.

It was not until 1870, however, that the Academy, originally called a "classical high school," was completed by Messrs. Hess and Melvin. The cornerstone was laid July 21 of that year with impressive ceremony, processions, and notable orators, including Henry Kyd Douglas, Judge John E. White, and the president of Hampden-Sydney College. The building served as the only school in Duffields until 1885, after which it was used for children below grade 5. Church members were in attendance as late as 1925.

#### **Architectural information:**

##### **Church:**

Gable-entry church 32' wide x 44' long

Limestone structure - Date stone "1829" set near peak of front gable

Stonework:

Large ashlar quoins on each corner ranging from 11" to 18" tall

Stone work on front elevation (east) is squared, ashlar material

Other three sides are laid in random rubble

Three-piece stone flat arches surmount the six openings on the front

The flat arches are comprised of a projecting keystone with flanking shoulder stones

Slate roof with decorative fish-scale pattern  
16' to top of eave  
Pair of brick chimney stacks that have been rebuilt with old bricks

3-bay front (east) gable – windows on lower and upper floor  
4-bay north gable (3 windows and door to balcony stair)  
3-bay south gable  
2-bay rear (west) gable

Original door and window frames, corner pinned construction  
Some original hardware remains such as drive pintels  
20<sup>th</sup> century 1-over-1 window sashes with mottled glass  
The 2 rear (west) windows have decorative stained glass

Original pair of entry doors – each with four shallow raised panels with Grecian stickings  
Two-light transom above

**School:**

Gable-entry school building  
Structure measures 22' wide x 38' long  
Sited parallel to the church and 60 feet to the north  
Less than 20 feet to Flowing Spring Road  
Set back 17 feet from the front plane of the church

Brick structure on a limestone foundation  
Laid in 5:1 common bond  
There is a stepped brick watertable just above the foundation  
Each long wall has four projecting square columns (north and south elevations)  
These projections have corbelled tops that recess into the wall plane

Date stone marked “1870” located near the base of the northeast corner  
Modern metal roof  
A single, small chimney stack exits the northwest corner of the roof

A 20<sup>th</sup> century addition covers the rear (west) elevation measuring 22' deep x 17' long  
This addition has been covered with modern metal siding  
Original 4-panel entry door with modern hardware  
Transom above has been covered and an air conditioning unit inserted  
A late 20<sup>th</sup> century brick stoop  
Front windows have arched tops in the Italianate style  
Windows on the north and south sides have flat tops

**Outhouse:**

An east-facing 2-door outhouse is located just north of the school building. This frame structure appears to date to the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century. The small wooden building has a shed roof punctured by two vent stacks.

**Cemetery:**

Between and behind the Church and School buildings are numerous gravestones dating from the 1830s through the modern era.

**Nomination Criteria:**

The JCHLC nominates this property under Criteria A for inclusion on the list of registered county landmarks. Criteria A states that a site may be nominated if, in the opinion of the JCHLC, it is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history. The Elk Branch Church Presbyterian Church has agreed to have the property listed as a Jefferson County Historic Landmark.

**Nomination Action:**

The JCHLC voted unanimously to add **Elk Branch Church and Academy**, under Criteria A, to the rolls of registered Jefferson County Historic Landmarks on May 21, 2014.