

MOUNT GROVE BAPTIST CHURCH
(Wyco Church)
County Route 12/1
Wyco
Wyoming County
West Virginia

HABS WV-306
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WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA
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FIELD RECORDS

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
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MOUNT GROVE BAPTIST CHURCH

(Wyco Church)

HABS No. WV-306

Location: County Route #12/1 (approximately one mile north of County Route #16), Wyco, Wyoming County, West Virginia

Significance: Built in 1917, Mount Grove Baptist Church is significant as a late example of Gothic Revival church architecture and for the history of mine worker facilities built in the area by the Wyoming County Mining Corporation.

Description: Set on a precipice overlooking the hollow below, Mount Grove Baptist Church (also known as Wyco Community Church) is a focal point for the small mining community of Wyco, West Virginia. The rectangular wood frame building sits on a high foundation of rusticated sandstone blocks laid in a random ashlar pattern. The exterior walls are clad with horizontal white wood clapboards. A set of double stone and concrete stairs is attached on the southern façade. The church features curved lancet windows and a pointed arch doorway characteristic of Gothic Revival design. There is an external red brick chimney at the east elevation cross gable. The cross gable roof is clad with asphalt shingles.

The stairs on the south elevation ascend to the building's first floor, which primarily contains a large sanctuary. The sanctuary is accessed through a covered porch and vestibule, and features a small altar platform along the northern wall. The space is well-lit and airy, with a vaulted ceiling, exposed wood roof trusses, and wainscoting. The wood-plank floor and wainscot is stained a dark brown, and the space contains double rows of long wood pews. From the southwest corner stairs lead to the basement. The basement is divided into three rooms – a boiler room, kitchen, and meeting room.

History: Mount Grove Baptist Church was constructed in 1917 by the Wyoming Mining Corporation to provide religious services for the inhabitants of Wyco, a bustling town built up around the nearby coal mining facilities. Due to the restricted and isolated nature of the site, much of the work was undertaken by hand rather than large machinery; therefore mining operations necessitated a large workforce. To accommodate this population, the Wyoming Corporation constructed 150 to 200 worker houses, a company store, a boarding house, a movie theater, and a sandwich shop, in addition to the mining structures. Two churches were constructed – this one served the white population of Wyco and the other (still extant) served the African American residents of the town.

The congregation remained active until the 1950s. As mining activities began to wane, so did church membership and the buildings was used only infrequently. In

1964, the property changed hands and the church became a non-denominational facility operated by the Wyco Independent Church. In 1977, the land was sold again to the Wyco Independent Baptist Church. By 1990, the building had been abandoned. In 2003, ownership was transferred to the Rural Appalachian Improvement League, which plans to rehabilitate the structure to support community use.

Sources: Shirley Weaver, et. Al., "Wyco Church," National Register of Historic Places nomination form, January 2010.

Historian: William Marzella, 2011

Project

Information: The project was completed as a component of Cornell University's Work Weekend outreach program. Field survey was completed in April 2010 and drawings were completed between April 2010 and May 2011. The documentation was submitted for the 2011 Holland Prize competition.