

SG-812



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 National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any 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 certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).

1. Name of Property

historic name Bushwick Avenue Central Methodist Episcopal Church
other names/site number _____
name of related multiple property listing no

2. Location

street & number 1139 Bushwick Avenue not for publication
city or town Brooklyn vicinity
state NY code NY county Kings code 047 zip code 11221

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,
I hereby certify that this X nomination ___ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.
In my opinion, the property X meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:
___ national ___ statewide X local
Michael Lynch Deputy S/HPO 3 FEB 2017
Signature of certifying official/Title Date
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.
Signature of commenting official _____ Date _____
Title _____ State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government _____

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:
X entered in the National Register _____ determined eligible for the National Register
___ determined not eligible for the National Register _____ removed from the National Register
___ other (explain:)
[Signature] 3/27/17
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

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5. Classification

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

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

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

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	private
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - Local
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - State
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - Federal

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	building(s)
<input type="checkbox"/>	district
<input type="checkbox"/>	site
<input type="checkbox"/>	structure
<input type="checkbox"/>	object

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	0	Total

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

N/A

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)

RELIGION / Religious Facility

RELIGION / Religious Facility

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions.)

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURY REVIVALS /
Italian Renaissance

foundation: Sandstone
walls: Brick, Terra Cotta, Sandstone

roof: Tile, Asphalt shingle

other:

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Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance of the property. Explain contributing and noncontributing resources if necessary. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, setting, size, and significant features.)

Summary Paragraph

Bushwick Avenue Central Methodist Episcopal Church is located at the east corner of Bushwick Avenue and Madison Street in the borough of Brooklyn, Kings County, New York. It is in the neighborhood of Bushwick, where the street grid is set diagonally from primary compass directions. The church is located in a primarily residential area, one block from Broadway, which is a predominantly commercial street and has elevated tracks for the J and Z subway trains. To the northwest of the church across Madison Street is a parking lot, beyond which is a row of two-story rowhouses. To the church's northeast are rowhouses of various materials and styles, and to the church's southeast are three four-story tenements. To the church's southwest, across Bushwick Avenue, is a mix of two- and three-story buildings that appear to date from the late nineteenth or early twentieth century but have undergone significant alterations.

Narrative Description

Bushwick Avenue Central Methodist Episcopal Church is 140 feet wide on its southwest side and 125 feet wide on the northwest side. Both frontages are 100 feet deep, and other than setbacks from the streets, the building occupies the entire lot. The building is primarily two-and-a-half stories tall, with a five-story octagonal entrance tower visually anchoring it at its west corner, where Bushwick Avenue and Madison Street intersect. When viewed from diagonally across the intersection, the building reads as a balanced, roughly symmetrical composition, with the commanding tower in the middle. Four two-and-a-half-story gabled pavilions project slightly from the building, two on each façade. The two pavilions that more closely flank the octagonal tower are larger. Two four-story towers, of markedly different designs from one another, anchor the north and south corners of the building.

The building's exterior retains a high degree of integrity. The main building material of the Bushwick Avenue Methodist Episcopal Church is tan brick, laid in stretcher bond with accents of white glazed terra cotta and red sandstone. The building sits on a foundation of rusticated red sandstone blocks. At the steeple's base, the main entrance to the church faces the street corner diagonally and reinforces the building's approximate symmetry along its two facades.

Each of steeple's five stories is different. On the first story, the main entrance door, reached by a stoop with eight stairs, is flanked by two windows that are on neighboring faces of the octagon plan. On the second story, each of the three exposed sides features a pair of tall, narrow rectangular windows beneath a smaller circular window with ornate terra-cotta surrounds, and foliate band running between them. The center pair of rectangular windows, above the door, is flanked by volutes. On the steeple's third story, two additional octagon faces are exposed by the pitch of the roof below. Each of these five faces features a rectangular stained-glass window flanked by raised bricks suggesting quoins, beneath a terra-cotta beltcourse running at the level of the lintels. A corbelled brick and terra-cotta cornice crowns this story. On the fourth story, seven faces are visible from the street, each featuring a tall arched stained-glass window with a prominent keystone. The windows are tied to one another with a stringcourse running at the spring line of the arches, above which are a plain frieze and a terra-cotta cornice. The fifth story, containing the belfry, has eight large louvered openings with eight volutes ornamenting the bases of the corners and a pressed-metal denticulated cornice. The roof is a steeply pitched octagonal pyramid of Spanish tile, topped by a simple, sharp finial.

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The northeast (Madison Street) façade is broken up visually into several sections. To the northeast of the octagonal tower is a large two-and-a-half-story gabled pavilion, separated from it by a smaller recessed two-story section. This recessed section features a doorway, now bricked in, with a white-glazed terra cotta cornice above it. A rectangular window with a red sandstone sill separates the doorway from the octagonal tower. The second story of the recessed section features a triplet of narrow round-arched windows above a red sandstone beltcourse. The large gabled pavilion features a two-story, round-arch, stained-glass window flanked by two narrower flat-topped ones with blind segmental arches, creating a Palladian-window motif. Each of these three windows is divided by a red metal spandrel between the first and second floors. The central arched window has alternating voussoirs of bricks and red sandstone. The large gable above the windows has six courses of red sandstone, equally spaced amidst the brick; terra-cotta coping; and a central rectangular pinnacle. Set in the gable near the top is a small round-arch window.

To the northeast of the large gabled pavilion is another two-story recessed section, similar to the one on the same facade described earlier. A two-story buttress separates this next recessed section from the pavilion; this buttress is more massive on the first story, has a terra-cotta festoon ornament and cornice between the stories, and two pressed metal cornices on the second story. The lower of these cornices meets the roof line of the main body of the church, and the upper one marks the end of the large gabled pavilion. The two-story recessed section features two doorways on the first story; the doorway closer to the octagonal tower is reached via a stoop of six stairs and has a red metal door. The doorway is flanked by brick piers, and every seventh course of brick is recessed to resemble rustication. Above the doorway is another six courses of bricks, and above that is a terra-cotta frieze. The frieze has vertical grooves, and raised shield emblems on the ends. Above this frieze is a terra-cotta cornice, above which is a long course of red sandstone. These form the sills for a group of three narrow arched windows on the second story. Above the arches is an additional course of red sandstone, which is separated from the roof line by a strip of red metal.

The next door to the northeast, also of red metal and reached by a stoop of three steps, is separated from the other door by a one-story brick pier on the first story. This pier continues the frieze of the earlier section with a terra-cotta festoon at the same level, and the cornice continues to crown this pier as well. The vertically misaligned brickwork on the second story above this pier suggests that the pier may have been a two-story buttress at an earlier time. The bottom of this doorway is within the sandstone foundation, so is lower than the first story of the building described thus far. Atop this doorway is brickwork laid in a dentil pattern, supporting a terra-cotta cornice. Immediately above this cornice is a course of red sandstone, forming the sill of two rectangular stained-glass windows above. A course of red sandstone forms the lintels of the two rectangular windows. Immediately above is a pair of arched, stained-glass windows with raised brick voussoirs.

Farther to the northeast, along the Madison Street façade, is another large, gabled two-and-a-half-story pavilion, similar in appearance but smaller than the one previously described. The pavilion protrudes from the rest of the building with brickwork on its piers that resembles quoins. The floor heights contained within are in keeping with the main mass of the building; that is, the first floor is raised above street level. Below the first floor, just at street level and cut into the foundation, are two red metal doors (non-contributing) of unequal height, with the left taller than the right. At the first floor, two large rectangular openings are divided into three one-over-one windows. Red sandstone lintels top these windows. Above these windows are recessed brick spandrels, and arched stained-glass windows on the second story. Red pressed metal further divides these arched windows into smaller window units. The major arched windows have alternating brick and red sandstone voussoirs, and a red sandstone course, spanning the gabled mass, connects the spring lines. The prominent keystones of the arches are united with the tops of the flanking piers by a second course of red sandstone. The gable features two more such courses above, establishing the levels of the sill and spring line

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of a thin, round-arch window located toward the apex. Like the others, this gable terminates in a rectangular pinnacle.

To the northeast of the gabled mass is a tower element, anchoring the building's north corner. Mirroring the other side of the smaller gabled pavilion, a doorway is reached via four stairs from the street and topped by a simple terra-cotta cornice supported by simple brick dentils. Above the cornice is a course of red sandstone, then a pair of small rectangular windows, then another course of red sandstone. This course forms the sill of a left-of-center, narrow, round-arch stained-glass window with projecting keystone on the second story, with another course of red sandstone spanning at the arch's spring line. Above the window is a blind roundel. Flush with the brick face, a mass, square in plan, rises above the arched window; the corners of this mass taper at the corners to form an octagon, with red sandstone coping forming the taper. The brickwork in each of the eight square faces of this octagonal tower form four smaller recessed squares in a two-over-two formation. Above this is a course of red sandstone, above which is a red pressed-metal cornice. The tower's roof is an octagonal pyramid of grey shingles topped by a sharp finial.

The southwest façade roughly mirrors the northwest façade, but with a few differences due in part to the southwest façade being 15 feet longer. The southwest side's smaller projecting pavilion has a different design from that of the northwest. This pavilion on the southwest facade has a doorway on its northwest side flanked by rusticated brickwork, further flanked by larger piers. A frieze runs along this entire doorway unit, composed of vertically grooved terra cotta flanked by terra-cotta shield emblems and festoons on the piers. A simple terra-cotta cornice tops this frieze. To the right of this doorway is a large window, divided into six panes in a three-over-three formation, and topped by a red sandstone lintel. On the second story of the gabled pavilion are two large rectangular windows, with red sandstone sills. A course of red sandstone spans the width the large gabled mass, and recesses just above the windows to form their lintels. Above these lintels are shallow brick segmental arches. A small Palladian window is set at the top of the gable, with a red sandstone course at the spring line of the center window's arch. The arch has a prominent red keystone, above which is another course of red sandstone and a rectangular pinnacle.

The recessed section that separates the lesser gabled pavilion from the south tower is also different from the corresponding section on the northwest façade. It has two smaller rectangular windows on the first story and a large rectangular window on the second. All three windows have red sandstone sills and lintels. This mass terminates on its right side by more quoin-like brickwork. To the right is another recessed small mass, slightly narrower and further set back than the first, but identical in fenestration.

The south tower also has a different design from the north tower. Its mass protrudes from the adjacent section of the building, anchors the south corner of the building. On its first story, piers and a cornice outline a wide doorway, of which a red metal door occupies only the right half, while the left half is bricked over. The door is one step above street level. On the second story, a block of red sandstone forms the sills of three rectangular windows, the side ones being narrower than the center. A red sandstone course forms the windows' lintels and unites them with the windows to the left on the second story of the recessed mass. The south tower's third story features a tall, narrow, round-arch, stained-glass window, with a red sandstone keystone and beltcourse at the arch's spring line. At this story, the sloped roof of the adjacent mass reveals a portion of the tower's northwest façade, which features a small blind-arched window, which also has a keystone and beltcourse of red sandstone running at the spring line. Although the spring lines of the two window arches are at the same level, the courses do not connect as the tower's third story has rusticated piers that separate the facades. Crowning the third story is a corbelled cornice and a brick parapet on the fourth story. Set within the parapet is the fourth, and highest, story of the tower, square in plan with chamfered edges. Each exposed facade of the tower's fourth story feature three closely spaced, narrow, round-arch windows, with a course of red sandstone circling the tower at the arches' spring line. Above the arched

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windows is a red pressed-metal cornice. The tower's roof is a square pyramid with grey shingles, topped by a simple finial. The roof of the main building, apart from the towers, is clad in brown shingles.

The church's interior reflects its "combination church" variant of the Akron Plan. The plan is divided into two large primary rooms, the sanctuary and the Sunday school room, both with a high degree of integrity. The sanctuary is the church's main large assembly hall, and corresponds to the two larger gabled pavilions on the exterior. Access is via an entrance room that is located on the first floor of the primary octagonal tower. One enters through the door that faces the street corner at a diagonal. The entry room contains two staircases that mirror one another, running along the building's exterior walls and meeting on the second floor above the doorway. This room is small, has white plaster walls and dark wood wainscoting.

To the east of this entry room is the sanctuary. This room has the same line of symmetry as the building's exterior, running diagonally through the lot. The sanctuary is two stories in height with a balcony in a flared U-shape. The focus of the room is the pulpit area, located in the opposite corner from the main entryway and separated from the rest of the sanctuary by a low wooden balustrade. The floor of the entire sanctuary is sloped downward toward the pulpit for visibility. Beyond the balustrade is a small, low, wooden stage, large enough for four chairs, an altar and a podium. Behind that is a larger, taller wooden stage that spans the width of the room. Along the rear wall is wooden paneling beneath a set of organ pipes that nearly reach the ceiling. A large elliptical arch frames the pipes, and a cross hangs in front of them. The floor is wooden, and covered by a red carpet down the three aisles and around the pulpit. Portions of the interior walls are composed of full-height sliding wooden panels which open into the Sunday school space. The stained-glass Palladian windows fill the sanctuary with daylight, and the interior cornice is at the spring line of the windows' arches. Above the cornice is vaulting that leads to the plain plaster ceiling, at the center of which is a large octagonal recess, delineated by wooden molding and further enlarging the space. Within the ceiling recess is another, smaller octagonal recess from which electric lamps hang.

Rows of red wooden pews are arranged in concentric arcs on the first floor facing the chancel. There are at most seventeen of these rows, when counting along the center aisle. (Given the square shape of the room, the rows in back are unable to continue to the side walls). The pews are high-backed, with armrests carved into volutes.

The second story of the sanctuary contains at most seven rows of wooden pews; these rows are concentric and face the pulpit, except at the ends where they follow the balcony's flared U-shape. The balcony's floor is also sloped downward toward the pulpit area, but at a steeper angle than the first floor. The balcony can be entered from a central main door, which leads to the previously mentioned staircases, or from a door on each end of the balcony.

The southeast and northeast walls of the sanctuary are composed of full-height white wooden panels, four on each wall, with wainscoting and side-by-side arches at the top. The northeast panels are fixed, but the southeast panels slide side-by-side into the wall behind the pulpit to reveal the Sunday school rotunda beyond.

The Sunday school rotunda is an auditorium space, two stories in height, and corresponds to the smaller gabled pavilion on the southwestern façade. The walls are of dark wood, and the northeast wall has four hinged wooden panels that are now fixed. A raised wooden stage in the north corner, which backs up to the pulpit area in the sanctuary, is the focal point. A gallery on the second floor wraps around the southwest, southeast, and part of the northeast side of the room. The gallery has a wooden parapet and brass rails, and behind this parapet are four raised tiers. Movable partitions, radiating in plan from the stage, divide the tiered area into nine rooms. Each of these partitions is divided into a lower section with four square panels and a

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large upper panel with an arch inside a rectangle. A stenciled pattern with a central cloverleaf with intricate internal patterns and half of the cloverleaf design on each end. Curtains currently separate these rooms from the central area, and above each curtained opening is an elliptical-arch transom window. Fourteen identical turquoise-and-gold stenciled designs, which are separated from one another by raised ceiling beams, are located where the ceiling curves down to meet the walls. Seven designs are above the northwest wall, three above the southwest wall, and one occupying a space in the south corner that is curved in plan. Above the northeast wall are two of the designs, with the clerestory windows occupying the remainder of this high wall space.

The design itself overall is a trefoil, formed of an outline of turquoise rectangles, and embellished within by turquoise volutes and minute trefoils. Minute gold trefoils also adorn the larger trefoil inside and out, and in the center of each larger design is a gold quatrefoil. The larger trefoils sit on a dashed horizontal line of more turquoise rectangles, which link the designs to one another across the ceiling. The ceiling of the main room features five large clerestory windows facing southeast, directly above the curtained openings, and curved corners where the remaining three walls meet the ceiling. The ceiling also has a grid of exposed beams and an octagonal medallion with a curvilinear pattern in the center.

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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 old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Architecture

Social History

Period of Significance

1887-1912

Significant Dates

1887, 1900, 1907, 1912

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Architect: George W. Kramer

Builder: G.S. Chapman

Period of Significance (justification)

The period of significance begins with the construction of the initial church in 1887 and extends through its dramatic expansion between 1910 and 1912.

Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)

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Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance and applicable criteria.)

The Bushwick Avenue Central Methodist Episcopal Church, completed between 1900 and 1912, is significant under criterion A for its association with the development of the Bushwick neighborhood of Brooklyn. The church was built and expanded during a prosperous period in the neighborhood's history, when a great diversity of churches were built to cater to the equally diverse growing population. The Bushwick Avenue Central Methodist Episcopal Church is also eligible under criterion C, as a prime example of the work of prominent church architect George W. Kramer. Kramer made many important contributions to church architecture, but perhaps his most distinguishing application is the "Combination Church" layout, a variation of the Akron Plan. Bushwick Avenue Central Methodist Episcopal Church is one such Combination Church and is also notable for its Renaissance Revival design.

The church is located in the neighborhood of Bushwick, within the New York City borough of Brooklyn. Bushwick was originally settled by the Dutch as the town of Boswijck in the 1660s, and was annexed by the city of Brooklyn in 1855. Around this time the area was seeing a large influx of German immigrants, who set up many breweries and gave the neighborhood a reputation for beer brewing. Fortunes in Bushwick were made in the glue, rope, sugar, oil, lumber, and shipbuilding industries. By the turn of the century, Bushwick boasted many fine freestanding Victorian mansions built by prosperous merchants and industrialists.¹

Improvements in transportation infrastructure in the area caused a major building boom in Bushwick, particularly the completion of elevated rail lines above Broadway and Myrtle Avenue in 1888. Many new groups joined the Germans in Bushwick, establishing English, Irish, Italian, Jewish, and Polish communities, who built for themselves various of houses of worship. Bushwick Avenue developed rapidly between 1888 and 1913; most of the lots in the neighborhood became occupied with wood-frame and later masonry rowhouses. This period was also marked by the construction of many large mansions for brewers, doctors, and other professionals and industrialists. The Italianate, Romanesque Revival, and Queen Anne were commonly used.

The creation and subsequent enlargements of Bushwick Avenue Central Methodist Episcopal Church correspond to this period of rapid development. The congregation was founded in 1886, by members mostly of English descent; a church building was constructed the following year as the first Methodist church in the neighborhood. The original building was located on the east corner of Bushwick Avenue and Ivy Street (later renamed Madison Street). It was a one-and-a-half-story Gothic wood-frame church measuring 40 feet x 80 feet with the long side along Ivy Street.² Shortly after, the church building expanded into the empty neighboring lot to the southeast, adding a one-story wood-frame Sunday school, nearly doubling the church's footprint.

The growth of the parish was rapid — "lightning like" according to a Brooklyn newspaper — requiring the establishment of another Methodist church several blocks to the north.³ This church was the Knickerbocker Avenue Methodist Episcopal Church, at the west corner of Knickerbocker Avenue and Ralph (now Menahan) street. No longer standing, it was a small wood-framed church, whose congregation was formed in 1890 for the families of farmers in the northerly area of Ridgewood who did not want to walk all the

¹ Norval White and Elliot Willensky. *AIA Guide to New York City*. New York: Oxford University Press, ©2010, 692.

² *Real Estate Record and Builders' Guide*. New York: F. W. Dodge Corp. v. 40 no. 1007 (July 2, 1887): 914.

³ "Knickerbocker Avenue Methodist Episcopal Church," *Brooklyn Daily Standard Union*, March 13, 1909.

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way to Bushwick Avenue. It was formed at the suggestion of the pastor at the time of the Bushwick Avenue church, which was viewed as the "mother church."⁴

In 1900, the congregation filed to replace the Bushwick Avenue church with a much larger building, designed by architect George W. Kramer in the Renaissance Revival style. In order to cause the least amount of disruption, this was accomplished in two phases, the first being an L-shaped addition to the original wooden church. This addition, featuring the two smaller gabled pavilions and the two minor towers that exist today, extended the building's length along both Bushwick Avenue and Ivy Street. The addition was complete by 1907, whereupon the original wooden building was replaced by the current central structure, which houses the sanctuary and features the two larger gabled pavilions and the 5-story central tower. The building as it exists today was completed by 1912 and is a "combination church," a type advocated by its architect, George Kramer.

George W. Kramer (1858-1938) was an architect from Ohio who had an immense impact on church architecture. He worked for the firm Jacob Snyder & Co. from 1880-85, where he and Snyder developed their ideas of church design, specifically the integration of the Sunday school with the main worship hall. When Snyder left the firm in 1885, Kramer became a full partner and the firm was renamed Kramer & Weary. By that time he had become the firm's sole manager of its special ecclesiological department. In 1894, when the firm dissolved, Kramer moved to New York, where he continued to practice, designing churches almost exclusively, referring to himself as an "Ecclesiastical Specialist." By the time he retired in 1924, he had designed around 2,200 churches all across the country.⁵

Initially formed in England and slowly adopted in the United States, Sunday schools were intended to provide children with basic education and religious instruction. Up until the mid-nineteenth century, churches did not devote much of their resources towards Sunday schools; at that time, however, churches began to invest more of their budgets in Sunday schools, as it was realized that a high percentage of a congregation's members came directly from the schools.⁶ Emphasis on Sunday schools was especially strengthened in 1872 when the International Sunday School Association adopted the Uniform Lesson System, which prescribed the same scripture studies to children of all ages and across the various Protestant denominations. This encouraged not only more space and resources being devoted to Sunday schools, but also new architectural forms that could accommodate teaching both individual age groups and an entire school.⁷

A landmark church in development of the large Sunday school space was the First Methodist Episcopal Church in Akron, Ohio, completed in 1870 by Jacob Snyder with the influence of philanthropist Lewis Miller. This church featured an attached, but fully separate Sunday school, with a speaker's platform, classrooms on the first floor and gallery level, and moveable partitions for classroom walls. This plan enabled separate lessons within the classrooms, but also quick and easy conversion to an auditorium space if it was necessary to address the entire school at once. Students could take part in lessons in an intimate classroom setting and then participate in a large, all-school gathering without having to leave their seats. The successful and efficient design of this church and Sunday school earned it national renown.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Bob Jaeger, *The Auditorium and Akron Plans: Reflections on a Half Century of American Protestantism*. Cornell University, 1984, 165-169.

⁶ Richard Franz Bach, "Church Planning in the United States, Part III: The Sunday School Room in Its Relation to the Audience Hall." *Architectural Record*, v. 40 (September 1916).

⁷ Jaeger, *The Auditorium and Akron Plans*, 246-47.

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The "Akron Plan," as it came to be called, would describe a church wherein the pulpit of the main worship space would be back-to-back with the speaker's platform of such a Sunday school rotunda.⁸ This variation of a "concert plan" church type, which is characterized by an open auditorium and raised platform, emerged out of the new style of worship services that developed during the nineteenth century revival movement. Worshippers wanted to hear the service and were less interested in actively engaging in the liturgy. A larger pulpit allowed ministers to be more active during sermons and more directly engage with congregation while the platform provided space for additional ministers or other individuals to participate as well as space for an organ and choir. In addition to the movable partitions and larger pulpit and platform, Akron Plan churches are often distinguished by highly decorative interior designs. Elaborate combinations of colored glass, wallpaper, decorative painting and stenciling were used to create a "worshipful atmosphere." This attitude toward decoration contrasts with that of earlier Protestant sects, which denounced decorative art for its historical ties with more lavish Catholic decorative traditions. This focus on creating a specific atmosphere is also reflected in the increased emphasis on music, illustrated by the prominent placement of the organ and the choir on the platform.

George Kramer, who joined Snyder's firm ten years after the Akron church was completed, experimented with the Akron plan, developing new, even more efficient church designs. His "combination church" variation describes a church in which a large Sunday school is attached to the church's main sanctuary room, but divided from it by large moveable partitions. The Sunday school, like the sanctuary, typically has a double-height ceiling, a gallery, and a speaking platform. Unlike the Akron Plan, where the speaker's platform in the Sunday school and the pulpit in the sanctuary are arranged back-to-back, a Combination Church has them placed side-by-side. These focal points are located in the corners of their respective rooms, which are separated from one another by moveable partitions. When the partitions are opened, the two spaces combine to form one large auditorium space, with the preacher being able to address the congregation and the Sunday school simultaneously. When the partitions are closed, the Sunday school functions separately from the services in the sanctuary. In a typical combination church, the tiered seating in the Sunday school gallery is divided into smaller classrooms via more moveable partitions, so the different school grades can be instructed separately when these partitions are closed, as larger groups when they are open, or en masse as a whole school.⁹ Aside from his minor refinements, the plan retains the significant features of the Akron and other auditorium plans including circular seating and sloping floors.

The Bushwick Avenue Methodist Episcopal Church contains all of these Combination Church features. In its Sunday school rotunda, separated from the main sanctuary by large sliding partitions, the Sunday school rooms are arranged on the gallery to face the stage on the floor. The floors of the rooms are tiered for views of the stage, and the partitions between the rooms are angled so that they radiate from the stage and do not obstruct the view. The main sanctuary is designed in accordance with Kramer's auditorium plan as well, pews arranged in concentric arcs on a bowled floor oriented toward the pulpit in the corner. The balcony has a steeper slope than the floor, with more curved seating, and is supported by thin columns that minimize visual obstruction. Some decorative stenciling has been retained on the sliding doors and ceilings in the Sunday school spaces.

The design of the Bushwick Avenue Central Methodist Episcopal Church contributes to its significance as well. The style is Italian Renaissance Revival, exemplified by its profusion of round arches, Palladian windows, strong horizontal stone courses, ornamental swags, and volutes above the main doorway. Up until his major work on the church, Kramer tended to design in the Romanesque Revival fashion, but this church

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.*, 170-171

Bushwick Avenue Central Methodist Episcopal Church
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reflects the changing taste in church architecture toward Renaissance forms, which was popular at the turn of the twentieth century. The decision to employ round-arched forms such as those found in Renaissance architecture is consistent with the Methodists' rejection of Gothic forms around the turn of the century. Gothic was considered too closely associated with the Episcopalians, from whom the Methodists separated; Protestants also typically preferred buildings with lighter colors and larger and lighter windows than those typically included in Gothic buildings. The color palette of the Bushwick Avenue Central Methodist Episcopal church reflects this, with its light terra cotta, tan brick, and contrasting accents of dark red sandstone.

The Bushwick Avenue Central Methodist Episcopal Church served not just the local Brooklyn community, but the larger Methodist community as well. The church's 1900-1912 expansion enabled it to host a region-wide conference in April of 1915. It was the sixty-seventh annual New York East Methodist Episcopal Conference, and featured 310 pastors, preachers, and board secretaries from Brooklyn, Long Island, and parts of Manhattan and Connecticut.¹⁰ The conference lasted just under one week and, in addition to bureaucratic procedures such as admitting new ministers and setting salaries, included deliberations calling for the censorship of motion pictures and the endorsement of women's suffrage.¹¹

The neighborhood around the Bushwick Avenue Central Methodist Episcopal Church has changed significantly since the building's completion in 1912. Bushwick's economy was especially hard hit by prohibition in the 1920s, given the high number of breweries. Just before prohibition, seventy breweries were in operation, and while some survived by diversifying their product offerings, only twenty-three breweries were still in operation by the Volstead Act's repeal. Bushwick's last brewery closed in 1976.¹²

Although many apartment houses were built in Bushwick in the 1920s, that would be the last new housing the area would see until the 1980s.¹³ As in much of the country, new construction was virtually absent during the Great Depression in the 1930s, continuing into the 1940s due to US involvement in World War II. In the 1950s and 60s, factors including rising energy costs forced many businesses out of Bushwick, resulting in the decline of the area and the neglect of much of its architecture, which fell into disrepair. Particularly detrimental was a five-year period between the late 1960s and early 1970s when, amidst a Federal Housing Administration scandal, Bushwick "was transformed from a neatly maintained community of wood houses into what often approached a no man's land of abandoned buildings, empty lots, drugs and arson."¹⁴ The area lost more of its historic architecture when buildings along Bushwick Avenue were burned down during rioting in 1977. Although today the area is rapidly gentrifying, only a fraction of its fine older buildings remain, a prominent one being Bushwick Avenue Central Methodist Episcopal Church. The same congregation continues to occupy the building and plays an important role in the community, hosting food drives, soup kitchens, and farmers markets.

During his career, George Kramer had designed thousands of churches, along with numerous other types of buildings.¹⁵ But beyond the sheer quantity of his designs, it was his development of the combination church that contributed the most to American church architecture. The Bushwick Avenue Methodist Episcopal

¹⁰ "M.E. Conference Opens Tomorrow," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, April 6, 1915.; "Conference Opens, Work Moves Fast," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, April 7, 1915.

¹¹ "Methodists Indorse Women's Suffrage," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, April 8, 1915.

¹² Ben Jankowski, "The Bushwick Pilsners: A Look at Hoppier Days." *Brewing Techniques*, January/February 1994.

¹³ "History of Bushwick," www.nyc.gov

¹⁴ Martin Gotlieb, "F.H.A Recalls Bushwick in the 1970s." *The New York Times*, February 2, 1986.

¹⁵ *Ibid*, 169

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Church is a prime example of one of these important churches, and retains a very high degree of integrity both inside and out, despite having endured over a century of economic ups and downs. On the outside, it is an expansive and beautiful example of Renaissance Revival architecture. Inside, it retains its combination church form and details, a significant variation of the influential Akron plan in American church architecture.

Bushwick Avenue Central Methodist Episcopal Church
Name of Property

Kings County, NY
County and State

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

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"Church Designs by George W. Kramer." *Architects' and Builders' Magazine*, v. 41 (1901) : 370-376.

Cracknell, Kenneth and Susan J. White. *An Introduction to World Methodism*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005.

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Jaeger, Bob. *The Auditorium and Akron Plans: Reflections on a Half Century of American Protestantism*. Cornell University, 1984.

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Real Estate Record and Builders' Guide. New York: F. W. Dodge Corp. v. 40 no. 1007 (July 2, 1887) : 914.

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White, Norval and Elliot Willensky. *AIA Guide to New York City*. New York: Oxford University Press, ©2010.

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 # _____
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other
- Name of repository: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

Bushwick Avenue Central Methodist Episcopal Church
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10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property .39 acres
(Do not include previously listed resource acreage.)

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 16 591433 4504880
Zone Easting Northing

3 _____
Zone Easting Northing

2 _____
Zone Easting Northing

4 _____
Zone Easting Northing

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The boundary is indicated by a heavy line on the enclosed map with scale.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

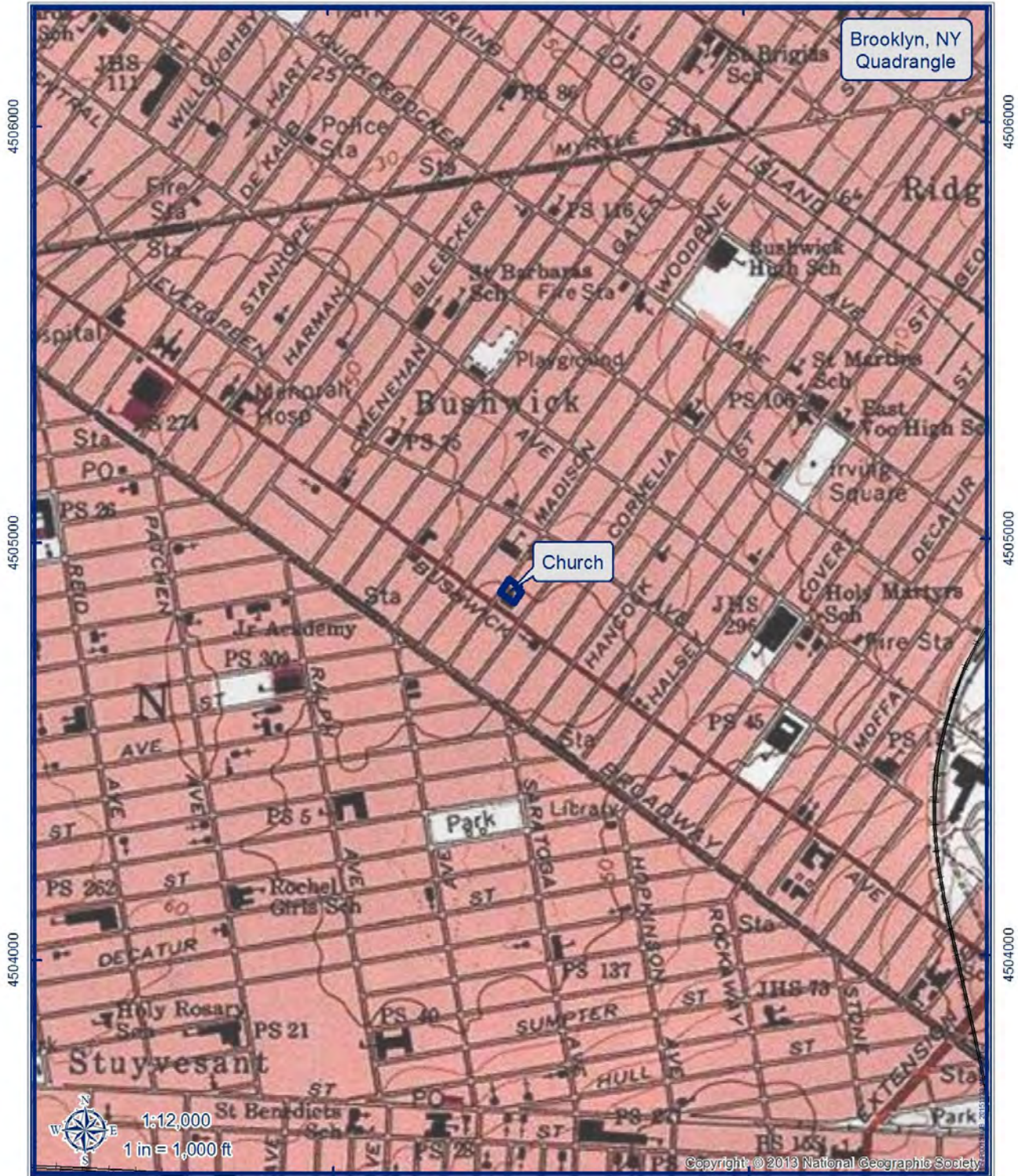
The boundary was drawn to include the parcels historically associated with the Bushwick Avenue Central Methodist Episcopal Church.

Bushwick Avenue Central Methodist Episcopal Church
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Bushwick Avenue Central Methodist Episcopal Church
Brooklyn, Kings Co., NY

1139 Bushwick Avenue
Brooklyn, NY 11221



Coordinate System: NAD 1983 UTM Zone 18N
Projection: Transverse Mercator
Datum: North American 1983
Units: Meter



Parks, Recreation
and Historic Preservation

Bushwick Avenue Central Methodist Episcopal Church
Name of Property

Kings County, NY
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1139 Bushwick Avenue
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Coordinate System: NAD 1983 UTM Zone 18N
Projection: Transverse Mercator
Datum: North American 1983
Units: Meter



Parks, Recreation
and Historic Preservation

Bushwick Avenue Central Methodist Episcopal Church
Name of Property

Kings County, NY
County and State

11. Form Prepared By

name/title William Ross (edited by Jennifer Betsworth, NY SHPO)
organization _____ date March 2016
street & number _____ telephone _____
city or town New York state NY zip code 10025
e-mail _____

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **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. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Continuation Sheets**
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

Photographs:

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map.

Name of Property: Bushwick Avenue Central Methodist Episcopal Church

City or Vicinity: Brooklyn

County: Kings State: NY

Photographer: William Ross

Date Photographed: March 2016

Description of Photograph(s) and number:

NY_KingsCo_BushwickAvenueCME_0001
South and West elevations, facing east

NY_KingsCo_BushwickAvenueCME_0002
South elevation, facing northeast

NY_KingsCo_BushwickAvenueCME_0003
West elevation, facing southeast

NY_KingsCo_BushwickAvenueCME_0004
Sanctuary, facing east

NY_KingsCo_BushwickAvenueCME_0005

Bushwick Avenue Central Methodist Episcopal Church
Name of Property

Kings County, NY
County and State

Sanctuary, facing southeast

NY_KingsCo_BushwickAvenueCME_0006
Sunday school room, facing northeast

NY_KingsCo_BushwickAvenueCME_0007
Sunday school room, second floor balcony, facing northeast

NY_KingsCo_BushwickAvenueCME_0008
Sunday school room, facing northwest

NY_KingsCo_BushwickAvenueCME_0009
Sunday school room, ceiling detail, facing northwest

Property Owner:

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name United Methodist Parish in Bushwick
street & number 1139 Bushwick Avenue telephone _____
city or town Brooklyn state NY zip code 11221

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.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 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 Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.



1871
METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH
1871

ONE WAY
MADISON ST

SUZUKI



Bushwick Av

NO PARKING
FOR THIS
SIDE OF THE
STREET

ST. ANNE'S
CATHEDRAL
OF THE
MOUNTAIN
OF THE
LORDS















UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

Requested Action:

Property Name:

Multiple Name:

State & County:

Date Received: Date of Pending List: Date of 16th Day: Date of 45th Day: Date of Weekly List:

Reference number:

Nominator:

Reason For Review:

Accept Return Reject Date

Abstract/Summary
Comments:

Recommendation/
Criteria

Reviewer Discipline

Telephone Date

DOCUMENTATION: see attached comments : No see attached SLR : No

If a nomination is returned to the nomination authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the National Park Service.



Landmarks Preservation
Commission

Meenakshi Srinivasan
Chair

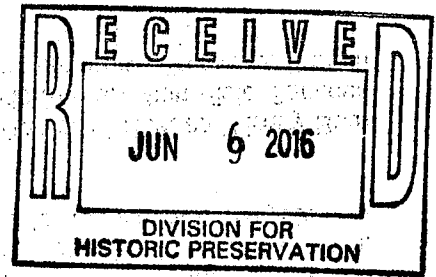
Sarah Carroll
Executive Director
SCarroll@lpc.nyc.gov

1 Centre Street
9th Floor North
New York, NY 10007

212 669 7902 tel
212 669 7797 fax

May 25, 2016

Ruth Pierpont, Deputy Commissioner
New York State Office of Parks, Recreation
and Historic Preservation
P.O. Box 189
Peebles Island
Waterford, NY 12188-0189



Re: Bushwick Avenue Central Methodist Episcopal Church, Brooklyn

Dear Deputy Commissioner Pierpont:

I write on behalf of Chair Meenakshi Srinivasan in response to your request for comment on the eligibility of the Bushwick Avenue Central Methodist Episcopal Church, located at 1139 Bushwick Avenue in Brooklyn, for the State and National Registers of Historic Places.

The New York Landmarks Preservation Commission's Director of Research Mary Beth Betts has reviewed the materials submitted by the Historic Preservation Field Services Bureau and has determined that Bushwick Avenue Central Methodist Episcopal Church appears to meet the criteria for inclusion on the State and National Registers of Historic Places. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Sarah Carroll

cc: Meenakshi Srinivasan, Chair
Mary Beth Betts, Director of Research



**Parks, Recreation
and Historic Preservation**

ANDREW M. CUOMO
Governor

ROSE HARVEY
Commissioner



6 February 2017

Alexis Abernathy
National Park Service
National Register of Historic Places
1201 Eye St. NW, 8th Floor
Washington, D.C. 20005

Re: National Register Nomination

Dear Ms. Abernathy:

I am pleased to submit the following four nominations, all on disc, to be considered for listing by the Keeper of the National Register:

Common School 32, Delaware County
First Methodist Episcopal Church of Walworth, Wayne County
South Presbyterian Church, Onondaga County
Bushwick Avenue Central Methodist Episcopal Church, Kings, County

I am also submitting additional information for the:

Alice Austen House, Richmond County (see letter).

Please feel free to call me at 518.268.2165 if you have any questions.

Sincerely:

Kathleen LaFrank
National Register Coordinator
New York State Historic Preservation Office