

**United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For HCRS use only  
received **APR 25 1983**  
date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

**1. Name**

historic North Church

and/or common The Old North Reformed Church

**2. Location**

street & number 120 Washington Avenue & 191 Washington Ave.  not for publication

city, town Dumont  vicinity of                      congressional district                     

state New Jersey code 07628 county Bergen code 603 0210 <sup>ks</sup> 8-1-23

**3. Classification**

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
	<u>MIA</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

**4. Owner of Property**

name The Old North Reformed Church

street & number 120 Washington Avenue

city, town Dumont  vicinity of                      state New Jersey

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Office of Deeds and Records

street & number Bergen County Administration Building

city, town Hackensack  vicinity of                      state New Jersey

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

(NJ-173)

title Historic American Bldgs. Survey has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no  
U.S. Dept. of the Interior

date 1935  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records Library of Congress

city, town Washington  vicinity of                      state D.C.

## 7. Description

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved      date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Old North Reformed Church building of 1801 is essentially a Wren-Gibbs Church structure modified by the use of pointed arched openings. Built largely of local coursed sandstone, it has a main rectangular block which is fronted by a partially projecting four stage tower with spire. The spire, window sash, doors and front porches are constructed of wood. The front facade is adorned with a classical pediment with a full entablature with modillions. Stained glass tracery windows are used in almost all window openings. The tower and 146 1/2' spire are especially elegant with light and narrow proportions. The building stands on a busy corner of Dumont's downtown. On its property are a Sunday School building (excluded) from 1963 of compatible design and a cemetery dating from the earliest years of the 19th century.

In general the exterior of the Old North Reformed Church building looks much as it did when built in 1801, though several renovations have somewhat altered its original appearance. When erected the structures' dimensions were 52' x 60'. However in 1860, the building was lengthened by 18 feet. At this time the original sandstone from the back wall of the edifice was added to the existing sides for aesthetic continuity and new brick was used for the less visible back facade. Another renovation took place in 1868 when the clear glass windows of the original design were replaced by stained glass tracery windows.

The front eastern facade has 3 bays, one of which is a projecting four stage central entrance tower. Above the entrance is the original sandstone dedication plaque which is in the original Dutch language of the early church founders. Above this are a series of openings: a tracery window, an oculus, and a pointed, louvred opening. The tower has a classical modillion cornice above which the spire rises. The base of the spire is octagonal in form, with Doric columns accenting each angle of the polygon. Lancet and almond shaped windows alternate on each side of the base. Above the base is a slender graceful octagonal spire in three stages, topped by a weathervane. The steeple has been rebuilt twice -- after a fire in 1926, and again in 1969, following the original design. The bays flanking the tower have tracery windows with brick arches,

**United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

North Church, Dumont Boro,  
Bergen County, NJ

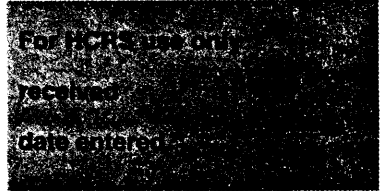
Continuation sheet

Item number

7

Page

1



## Description (cont.)

above small entrances which are covered by small ornamental porches. A pediment with full entablature and modillions accents the facade.

The side facades of the church are four bays in length with large stained glass tracery windows and a modillion cornice.

The church edifice is entered through a vestibule, which leads to an auditorium. Corner stairs from the vestibule lead to a U-shaped balcony with pews and original slave benches from the 19th century. The balcony is supported by unfluted Corinthian columns. Original sets of enclosed pews line the nave of the building.

The west end of the auditorium has a main altar from 1843, behind which is a raised platform used by the choir. The back wall, behind the choir, is adorned by two fluted Corinthian pilasters carrying a full classical entablature, which frames a devotional painting. Both the walls and ceiling of the church's interior are of plaster with wooden detail.

The North Church building is located on the southwest corner of Washington and Madison Avenues in the center of Dumont's small downtown. It is adjacent to the borough's busiest intersection. Washington Avenue (formerly known as Schraalenburgh Road) is the oldest road in the borough. The church building's steeple is the tallest element on the horizon in its vicinity causing it to be a visual landmark for a very large area.

Neighboring buildings are small town commercial structures whose building lines begin at the sidewalk. The church property is an oasis of greenery at the center of the small commercial area. The church building and the adjacent education building are set back from the sidewalks in landscaped yards.

Four tall trees, three maples and an elm, stand on the edges of the lawn in front of the church building. Sidewalks from Madison Avenue, Washington Avenue, and the parking lot on the south lead to

**United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

North Church, Dumont Boro,  
Bergen County, NJ

Continuation sheet

Item number

7

Page

2

## Description (cont.)

the front entrance. A flagpole stands on the grassy, shrubbed island between the driveway and the macadem parking lot. A privet hedge is located at the front edge of the lawn and along the north property line. A five-foot chain link fence encloses the cemetery which is located behind (west of) the church and church school building. The grassy cemetery is neatly maintained, and is dotted with tall trees and a dogwood tree. It has gravestones with dates between 1804-1936 including stone slabs with shaped, arched-heads dating to the early 19th century. Shrubs are planted along the south side of the church and the east and south sides of the church school building.

The church school building, a 1913 structure rebuilt in 1963, is located southwest of the North Church Building, and is attached by a two-story hyphen at the western (rear) end of the church's south side. The church school building's Colonial Revival, gable-ended facade has returns and 6/6 sash. The 2 1/2-3 story building is sited and massed in such a way that it appears of lesser height and mass than the main block of the church. The front building line of the church school building is set back allowing unobscured views of the church. Neighboring buildings to the south are located close to the street and they and the trees in front of the church school building obscure views of it. The church school building in its context is a neutral building and does not detract from the dominant visual position the North Church occupies in Dumont. It has, however, been excluded from this nomination since it does not contribute to the character of the church and is actually a separate building.

## 8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/ humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention	Church	

**Specific dates** 1801

**Builder/Architect** Peter J. Durie

**Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)**

Since 1801, Old North Reformed Church has played a significant role in regional ecclesiastical history. The church edifice was erected for one of two rival congregations during an important and turbulent period in the history of the Dutch Reformed Church, when the new "Great Awakening" ideologies brought over from Holland, caused a lasting rift within the denomination. North Reformed Church is an excellent example of a regional church type seen in Bergen County which is characterized by a Wren-Gibbs church plan incorporating the use of pointed arched openings. However, Old North's graceful proportions and tall, slender spire distinguish it from the other eight Federal Period stone church buildings still extant in Bergen County.

History

During the 17th and early 18th centuries, residents of Schraalenburgh (now Dumont) traveled to Hackensack's Dutch Reformed Church for their religious activities. In 1724, the Schraalenburgh parishioners formed their own congregation, and in 1725, a church was erected one mile south of present day Old North Reformed Church.

During the third quarter of the 18th century, concurrent with rising political tensions, religious disputes split the Schraalenburgh congregation into two rival groups; the Coetus (the radical faction of the "Great Awakening") and the Conferentie, (the conservative, traditional group). This rivalry led in 1799, to a lasting break within the church. The two groups decided to erect their own separate church edifices and, in 1801, the Conferentie built Old North Church at its present location, one mile north of the old structure.

The site chosen for the North Church building was given to the congregation by Isaac Kipp. Peter Durie, a New York builder, was chosen to construct the church building. The only specific directions given to the 25 year old builder was that the church's spire should exceed by at least 20 feet, that of its rival South Schraalenburgh Church of Bergenfield (already listed on the National Register.)

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

(see attached)

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property 7/10

Quadrangle name Yonkers

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

### UMT References

A	<u>1</u> <u>8</u>	<u>5</u> <u>8</u> <u>4</u> <u>5</u> <u>8</u> <u>0</u>	<u>4</u> <u>5</u> <u>3</u> <u>2</u> <u>3</u> <u>8</u> <u>0</u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing

B							
	Zone	Easting	Northing				

C							
	Zone	Easting	Northing				

D							
	Zone	Easting	Northing				

E							
	Zone	Easting	Northing				

F							
	Zone	Easting	Northing				

G							
	Zone	Easting	Northing				

H							
	Zone	Easting	Northing				

### Verbal boundary description and justification

The northern half of Block 84, Lot 22.

### List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	code	county	code
-------	------	--------	------

state	code	county	code
-------	------	--------	------

# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Laura Ellen Fishleder/Researcher (Incorporating information from NR form by Geo. Salminen & Miles Allen of North Church)  
 organization Bergen Co. Office of Cultural and Historic Affairs date \_\_\_\_\_

street & number 155 Main Street telephone (201)646-2323

city or town Hackensack state New Jersey

# 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

\_\_\_ national    \_\_\_ state    X local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature Allen R. Senich

title Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer date 4/8/83

**For HCRS use only**

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

for [Signature] Entered in the National Register date 5/26/83  
 Keeper of the National Register

Attest: \_\_\_\_\_ date \_\_\_\_\_  
 Chief of Registration

**United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

North Church, Dumont Boro,  
Bergen County, NJ

Continuation sheet

Item number 8

Page 1

## Significance (cont.)

Peter Durie's church building of 1801 reveals a strong debt to Hackensack's Dutch Reformed Church, and is architecturally closely related to other churches influenced or founded by the Hackensack congregation. The design combines the use of a Wren-Gibbs plan with pointed arched openings. It shares these characteristics with the eight other Federal period churches extant in Bergen County today, yet the Dumont Church is distinguished from the others, by its taller, lighter proportions, and elegant spire.

The onset of the nineteenth century marks the beginning of Old North Church as a separate congregation worshipping in its own sanctuary. It was to be an eventful century for the church—begun out of the Coetus-Conferentie conflict; going through a time of quiet growth, interrupted by the bloodiest war the nation had yet known; and culminating in a period of peace and prosperity for the church and for the entire community.

The Coetus congregation started building their new church in 1799, to the west of the old building. The Conferentie group offered to share in the expense of its building but was repeatedly refused. Since the old church was in a state approaching collapse, the Conferentie decided to erect a new church of their own.

Two Revolutionary War patriots, Colonel Isaac Kipp, and Colonel Isaac Nicoll, both offered land for the church. Kipps' land in Schraalenburgh was selected to be the site of North Church. Six managers were chosen as a building committee - Jacob Quackenbush, Isaac Kipp, John Demarest, Nicausey Voorhees, Karel Debaur, Peter L. Demarest and Johannes Blauvelt. Peter Durie, a well-known New York builder, was asked to undertake the construction of the church.

The building was completed and dedicated in December of 1801. According to the custom of the day, pews were sold at public auction. The proceeds of this auction raised approximately \$14,000.

**United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

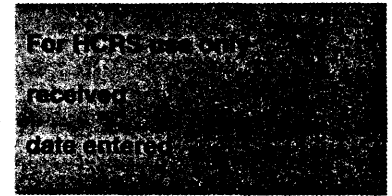
**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

North Church, Dumont Boro,  
Bergen County, NJ

Continuation sheet

Item number 8

Page 2



In 1857, Benjamin Taylor wrote of the separation:

"The spirit of the controversy, especially in Schraalenburgh, became very bitter. Contests about church property arose. Lawsuits were instituted and the line of division drawn throughout the respective communities. Cases of discipline of ministers and others were fruitful occasions of difficulty; suspensions and depositions ensued; and painful scenes agitated the community. In some instances, newspaper controversies became sharp and for years family and social relations were often sadly marred. No ecclesiastical relation or intercommunion between these parties, as churches, has since this secession been maintained."

With the growth of the church during this period, ministering to the needs of two congregations (Hackensack and North Church) had become too much for one man. With Romeyn's resignation in 1833, it was decided to end the joint relationship. The congregation of Old North Church felt they needed a fulltime minister, and when they called John Garretson in 1834, he was to be their pastor alone. This, of course, necessitated building a parsonage in Schraalenburgh.

Also in 1833, the use of Dutch in the services was discontinued completely. In the early days, Dutch had been the only language used. English was introduced later and eventually came to predominate.

Garretson accepted a domestic missionary appointment in Brooklyn in 1836. The congregation called as his successor Michael Osborne, a Virginia Presbyterian. It was North Church's first serious experiment with leadership outside the Dutch community, which unfortunately proved unsuccessful. The pastor's lack of familiarity with Dutch tradition may have been a large part of the problem; although the church had abandoned the Dutch language in its services, it was still commonly spoken among the people, and they had a strong sense of identity and an acute awareness of their past. In 1839, Osborne was accused of preaching an unorthodox doctrine. The ensuing conflict became so heated that Osborne resigned in 1841.



**United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

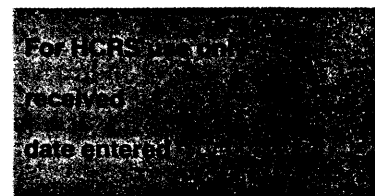
**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

North Church, Dumont Boro,  
Bergen County, NJ

Continuation sheet

Item number 8

Page 3



Significance (cont.)

Cornelius Blauvelt was the next minister; his pastorate lasted over fifteen years. Early in his stay in Schraalenburgh, in 1842, the celebration of the Lord's Supper was changed from a standing to a sitting position. A few years later, in 1846, the first Sunday School was organized—an institution which today is so much a part of church life that we assume it must always have been there. The first classes met in the belfry, with the children arranged on the steps by age. They could not meet in the winter because there was no heat.

Things were to happen after Blauvelt left that brought big changes to the sleepy, rural Schraalenburgh community and church. The first of these was the arrival of Dr. William R. Gordon from Long Island as pastor of North Church in 1858. Much needs to be said of this remarkable man; he was a preacher and writer of rare ability and a community leader of insight and character who helped mold the life of the community in difficult times. During his pastorate (1858-1880) the church reached a high point in size and influence. By 1859 there were so many applicants waiting for pews to become available (pews were still owned, but a pew rent also paid; families sat in their own pews) that it was decided to enlarge the church by eighteen feet from the last window.

The second big change to reach Schraalenburgh, in 1859, was the completion of the first railroad up the Northern Valley, through Englewood and Cresskill. This brought many new, non-Dutch inhabitants to the area and was a decisive factor in the area's rapid growth after this time.

The third change, of course, was the outbreak of the Civil War and the cataclysmic effects it was to have on this rural backwater.

New Jersey, and Bergen County in particular, was not clearly pro-Union and had strong pro-slavery sympathies. With its southern portion below the Mason-Dixon line, a large trade with the South, and its own long association with slavery, New Jersey considered itself a border state rather than a Northern one. Bergen County had been one of the slave-trading centers of New Jersey and slavery was an accepted part of county life among the Dutch. In 1804 the New

**United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

North Church, Dumont Boro,  
Bergen County, NJ

Continuation sheet

Item number 8

Page 4

## Significance (cont.)

Jersey Legislature had passed a law which provided for gradual emancipation, but it was the Quakers who had brought this about, with the help of certain enlightened men such as Livingstone, over the strenuous objections of the Democratic Dutch farmers. In 1846, the Legislature went further and declared slavery illegal, but pro-slavery sentiments persisted long afterward.

Against this background, it is easy to see why the ardent abolitionist views of Dominie Gordon were considered so controversial. A brilliant orator and not one to mince words, he tackled the slavery issue head-on, denouncing the Supreme Court's Dred Scott decision as "a sin against God and a crime against man." He called for support of Lincoln and the Union cause in an area where Lincoln supporters were in a minority. There were some in the congregation who objected, saying he was preaching politics; he insisted he was not. Many of Gordon's sermons were published; it is significant that his sermon on Lincoln's death, which denounced the vitriolic attacks that had been made on Lincoln (probably by the local paper, The Bergen County Democrat) was the one sermon published "by request of the consistory."

Although tempers ran high during the Civil War and many harsh words were exchanged, no fighting actually took place in Bergen County, and the war between the states did not have such a permanently divisive effect on church members as the Revolution had had. Dominie Gordon was able to provide effective leadership even amidst great strife, and the war's end found Old North Church stronger than ever. People came from as far as Westwood, there being no church nearer; many tales are told of the long lines of vehicles, from surreys to farm wagons, which formed an unbroken, dusty group on roads on Sunday morning. It is also said that poorer people would walk barefoot most of the way to church to avoid dirtying their shoes; they would then slip them on at the edge of town and continue on to services.

As the 19th century drew peacefully to a close, the congregation that began as a small group, struggling to establish itself after many years of conflict, found itself a vital and thriving center of community and spiritual activity, looking forward to a new century and new opportunities for growth.

**United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

North Church, Dumont Boro,

Continuation sheet Bergen County, NJ

Item number 8

Page 5

Significance (cont.)

The early years of the 20th century saw the church moving briskly under first the Reverend George Cotton and then, in 1906, Reverend Charles Wykoff Gulick. Improvements were planned to church and parsonage. The sale of church land, including some of the farm land tilled by the pastors of earlier days, made possible a new roof for the church and repairs and redecoration for the sanctuary, including a new hardwood floor for the parsonage. By 1909 the parsonage windows glowed at night with the installation of electricity.

Through all the many years of its existence, the Old North Church had been the only church in Dumont Borough. In 1910, for the first time, it was joined by another denomination, the First German Methodist Episcopal Church.

The idea of a town clock was conceived by the Dumont Choral Class, a social organization for the musically inclined. Two successful "clock concerts" made this possible, and, after considerable debate, the Old North Church steeple was finally selected as the highest--therefore most suitable--location in town. Four faces of the clock looked out toward the four points of the compass, and the works inside the base of the towers have continued to chime the hour even though the clock faces were removed in 1969 for the architectural restoration of the original steeple.

The first church house was completed in 1913 and promptly filled with activity--Sunday School, men's and boys' clubs, basketball, and the church's newest organization, the Ladies' Aid Society, which had been formed in 1912.

During World War I an embarkation camp was needed for the troops shipping to and from France, and Dumont was chosen as the site. The building of Camp Merritt began on the eastern edge of town. Old North Church, like the rest of the town, made these soldiers welcome. A group of girls formed the "Girls Patriotic League" to furnish entertainment for the troops.\* Families invited soldiers to Sunday dinner. During the war years alone, one-hundred thirty-five soldiers were married in Dumont. In 1926 there was activity at the Church of an unexpected and disastrous nature: two spectacular fires, within weeks of each other. During a severe coal

**United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

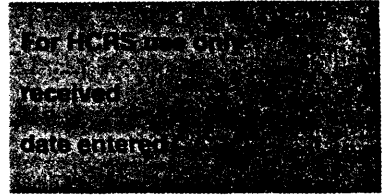
**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

North Church, Dumont Boro,  
Bergen County, NJ

Continuation sheet

Item number 8

Page 6



Significance (cont.)

shortage, when it had become necessary to burn soft coal to heat the buildings, a spark landed on the church-house roof; before it could be brought under control, the building was almost ruined.

Less than two months later, early one morning, a spring thunderstorm blew up and a bolt of lightning struck the steeple. Flames from the solid white oak beams could be seen for miles around. For nearly three hours fire departments from every town in the area fought the blaze. The unique height of the steeple made it almost impossible to reach the flames until Tenafly's pumper arrived on the scene with a stream of water that was powerful enough to attack the heart of the fire. North Church rebuilt the steeple following the fire.

Faithfully maintained by successive congregations, North Church survived the Depression, and World War II and continues to function as a social and spiritual center of Dumont.

\* Townspeople helped in the recreation centers.

**United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

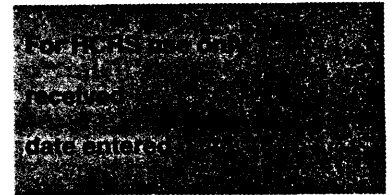
**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

North Church, Dumont Boro,  
Bergen County, NJ

Continuation sheet

Item number 9

Page 1



9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Bogart, Fred W., "Bergen's Dutch Churches, "The Sunday Record (December 17, 1972). Published by The Record, Hackensack, N.J.

Belcher, Richard (architect), Haworth, N.J. interview written December 15, 1980.

Spring, Estella C., Miss Mary Demarest's Recollections, written down in 1951. Old North Reformed Church Collection.

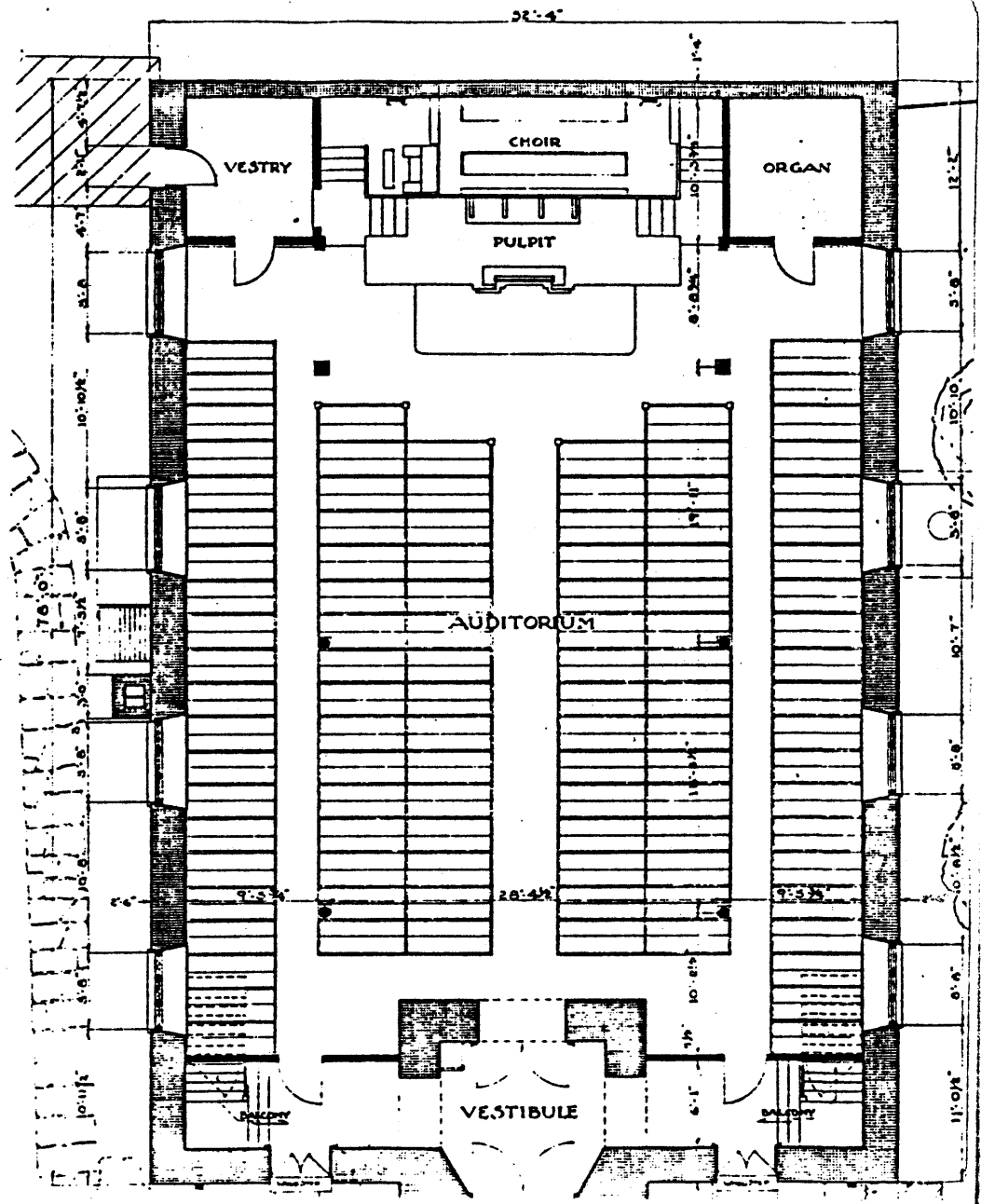
Old scrapbook of newspaper clippings and memorabilia, Old North Reformed Church Collection (interview with Miss Mary Demarest).

H. Jeanne Altshuler, Dumont Heritage, published by the Mayor and Council of the borough of Dumont, N.J., 1969, pp. 60-65.

The Story of The Old North Reformed Church, published by the church, 1976, p. 25, 27.

Spring, Dr. John C., Let's Start from the Beginning, a series of historical sermons preached in 1949 and revised up to 1964. Old North Reformed Church collection.





North Church  
 Dumont, Bergen County, NJ

Floor plan, taken from the  
 HABS drawings.

