

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 ST. PAUL'S EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH
other names/site number HELDERBERG EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

2. Location

street & number 1728 HELDERBERG TRAIL
city or town BERNE
state NEW YORK code NY county ALBANY code 001 zip code 12023

	not for publication
	vicinity

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 X statewide local

Richard Purpont SSHPO 9/12/16
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:

- 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) _____

For Edson W. Beall 11-2-16
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	1	buildings
0	0	sites
0	1	structures
0	0	objects
1	2	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.)

RELIGION: religious facility (church)

Current Functions
 (Enter categories from instructions.)

RELIGION: religious facility (church)

7. Description

Architectural Classification
 (Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE REPUBLIC: Federal

 MID-19TH CENTURY: Greek Revival

Materials
 (Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: STONE, CONCRETE

 walls: BRICK, VINYL

 roof: ASPHALT

 other: WOOD, METAL, GLASS

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Narrative Description

Summary Paragraph

St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church, now the Helderberg Evangelical Lutheran Church, is a historic house-of-worship located in the rural hamlet of Berne, Albany County, New York. The nominated building consists of the original church edifice—a two-story brick-walled meetinghouse of transitional Federal-Greek Revival style characteristics—and a rear wood frame social hall added in 1915 and subsequently modified and expanded. The church is a load-bearing masonry structure with walls laid up in both Flemish and common bond brickwork and was built on a rectangular plan above an unexcavated basement; inside this translates into a roughly square-shaped auditorium space, the balance of the plan being given over to an entrance vestibule with an open staircase that provides vertical communication with a three-sided gallery. The roof of the church is gabled, its ridge aligned parallel with the flank elevations, and it is classically pitched and fully pedimented on the main elevation. Exterior characteristics portray both the relative conservatism of the design for the mid-1830s as well as features of a more progressive stylistic nature. The division of windows into upper and lower units, as opposed to single vertical bays, aligns the building with long-established models, as does the use of Flemish-bond brickwork on the façade. The three-stage bell tower which rises from the gabled roof exhibits distinctive Greek Revival-style detailing, while the remaining original interior finish work is also of Greek Revival-style conception and, as such more, is in keeping with contemporary developments in American architectural design, unlike the more conservative treatment of the building's masonry envelope. The auditorium, while updated numerous times since the building was completed in the 1830s, nevertheless generally retains its original spatial characteristics, its open volume made possible by a series of impressively scaled king-post trusses, which sustain the broad roof. The auditorium communicates directly with the social hall behind it, which has also been modified many times in its history and which presently portrays finishes and spatial features of a more contemporary nature. Also on the property, and situated between the church and the road, is a freestanding bell tower which contains the bells from both St. Paul's and St. John's Lutheran Church of East Berne, the two organizations which merged to create the present Helderberg Evangelical Lutheran Church.

Narrative Description

Location & Setting

St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church is located on the north side of State Route 443—known otherwise as the Helderberg Trail—in Berne, an unincorporated hamlet located in the Town of Berne in Albany County's "Hill Town" region. This rural region, inclusive of the towns of Berne, Knox, Rensselaerville, and Westerlo, represents the western portion of the county, which corresponds with the elevated landmasses of the Helderberg Mountains, themselves a geographic feature of the Allegheny Plateau. The nominated building is set back from the road and is oriented with its gable-fronted facade facing southwards, tending slightly to the southwest. The attached social hall extends northwards from the rear of the brick church, these two sections having parallel roof ridges. The nominated parcel is generally flat but the grade falls off towards the rear, or north, which allows for the social hall to have two tiers of usable space with a finished basement area being accessible from grade. Entrance to the church is via the principal elevation, where the central door is flanked by decorative shrubs contained within associated beds with low stone enclosures. The social hall can be accessed via a ramp on the east elevation, which communicates with the main level, or via the north elevation, where there is a door corresponding with a finished lower level (there is additionally an entrance on the west side). To the east of the building is a large unpaved parking area, beyond which is an open expanse of grass; on the north side of the parking area is a small utilitarian building erected for Verizon (cell phone antennae were installed in the bell tower 2009-10, and this building is related to that function). To the immediate west of the church complex is a residential property, beyond which is the sprawling Berne-Knox-Westerlo school facility. Across the road, to the south, are residential properties. Between the church and the road is situated an open brick tower built on a square plan and covered by a hipped roof. Although a non-contributing feature, it presently houses the bells from St. Paul's and St. John's of East Berne, which consolidated into a

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single religious organization in 2009. This nomination includes one contributing feature, the church and attached social hall. The freestanding bell tower and Verizon utility building have been deemed non-contributing features.

Construction Overview

The church, not including the rear hall, is a load-bearing brick structure with both hand-hewn and reciprocating-sawn internal framing fashioned from locally sourced hemlock. The façade, inclusive of the tympanum, was laid up in Flemish bond; the remaining elevations were laid up in common bond in a 5:1 stretcher-to-header ratio. The foundation is formed of locally quarried stone dressed into rectangular-shaped units. Window and door apertures are spanned by flat brick arches. The moulded frieze and cornices were fashioned from wood, as was the sheathing and detailing of the bell tower; moulding profiles reflect Greek Revival precedents. Inside, the framing sustaining the first-floor was not observed. The roof framing is visible in the attic and consists of a series of king post trusses which receive purlins that in turn sustain common rafters aligned between the upper chords of each truss; the bell tower is also sustained by a heavy timber structure that is integrated into the rest of the roof frame. Interior plaster finish was rendered directly onto the inside face of the brick walls or otherwise on split-board lath. The original and newer 1890s stove flues, no longer in use, have been brought down below roofline; the newer ones are still expressed on the north wall of the auditorium and both the earlier and later iterations are visible within the attic. The roof is currently covered with asphalt shingling. Window openings, originally of a clear sash type, are now fitted with decorative stained glass installed in 1904; the original clear multi-pane sash had been previously replaced with larger paned sash in 1890.

Exterior

The church edifice will be described first, exclusive of the attached social hall. It was erected on a rectangular plan and is three bays wide with center entrance on the south-facing façade by four bays wide on the east and west flank elevations; the rear wall, now concealed behind the social hall addition, is currently punctuated by a single round-arched window that can be seen from within the social hall's principal space, in addition to a door. Fenestration is symmetrically composed and on the façade consists of a broad entrance bay flanked to either side by single windows, with three evenly spaced windows corresponding internally with gallery level, the outer ones matching the position of those below in the vertical plane. The entrance aperture, while it retains its original size, is now fitted with non-historic paired doors that have surface-mounted exterior strap hinges; these doors are spanned by a narrow rectangular transom with rectilinear muntins. The gable is treated as a classical pediment with moulded wood frieze and cornices, along with corresponding raking sections; centered within the tympanum is an elliptical fanlight which, like the principal windows, contains stained glass from 1904. The bell tower, which rises from the roof ridge and which is flush with the south elevation, is composed of three parts: a battered base clad in imbricated wood shingles, a tall middle stage, and a shorter terminal stage. Both the middle and upper stages have pilastered corners, moulded cornices, and round-arched openings. The louvered openings, while they match the original wood ones, are formed of composite material so as to not interfere with the optimal functioning of the cell antennae installed within. The corners of the building were at one time marked by quoins, presumably wood, which have since been removed; it also appears the jack arches above the windows were fitted wood to imitate cut-stone lintels.

The east and west flank elevations are identical in conception. Both have eight windows, four each at first and second story level, which are spanned by jack arches composed of 18 bricks each. Small "closer" bricks are visible within the header courses and were used to create squared jambs for the apertures. The windows are symmetrically arranged within the wall and in relation to one another but are clustered near the center of each elevation. The openings are fitted with stained glass commemorative windows with nine-light wood storm windows. The principal frieze and cornice of the main elevation is carried around to the flanks; it consists of a deep entablature with moulded architrave and boxed cornices to which open gutters are now affixed.

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The rear elevation is now largely screened from view. The principal frieze and cornice are terminated by simplified returns while a moulded raking cornice adorns the gable. An exterior chimney associated with the social hall abuts the rear elevation, slightly off center, and penetrates the raking cornice; adjacent to it is a small framed-out projection associated with the cell antennae located in the steeple.

The social hall appears much modified from its original ca. 1915 incarnation. It is a broad, gable-roofed building with a roughly square plan and on its east elevation projects forward from the east wall plane of the church. The building has a finished, accessible-at-grade basement which can be entered by a door on the north elevation. The principal entrance is on the east elevation and is approached by means of a ramp; there is also a small bump-out at its southeast corner which is engaged with the east flank elevation of the church. The hall is five bays wide on the east elevation, five bays wide on the north elevation, and four bays wide on the west elevation, where another entrance is present; the fenestration is arranged in an asymmetrical manner. The exterior of the building has vinyl siding, vinyl windows and an asphalt shingle roof.

Interior

The church's interior is organized in a characteristic nineteenth century meetinghouse fashion with an entrance vestibule, or narthex, beyond which is the auditorium, or nave, which features congregant seating at ground level and in the gallery above and, against the far (north) wall, the liturgical center. From the vestibule central doors open into auditorium and onto a center aisle; this circulation plan represents an 1890 reworking of the original 1830s scheme:

When the church was built the pews were box-like seats with a door to each pew. There were 60 pews, and so there were 60 handmade doors with two panels in each door... These pews were built with a wide board back and seat, closed beneath the seat... There were five blocks of pews. When the church was built, there were two doors from the hall into the auditorium; for each door, there was an aisle leading to the rear end of the church. Under the gallery on each side, the floor was raised four inches above the central section... The posts supporting the gallery were in those pews, some in the front corner of the pew and some in the back corner of the pew next to the aisle. From the door on each side of the first post, there were no seats, but here were stoves for heating. In the center between the two aisles were two rows of pews which extended from the wall to the altar platform, except for three seats for an aisle across the front. In front of the last post there was a short aisle to the outside wall and here were four or five pews set at right angles to the other pews... The [pulpit] platform was about four feet higher.¹

The present liturgical center, behind which is a large round-arched window which is centered in the wall and fitted with stained glass, was also extensively remodeled in the 1890s and in more recent times. It consists of a two-tiered dais upon which the altar, pulpit, lectern and baptismal font are situated. The following account recalls the original 1830s configuration:

The altar platform extended from one aisle to the other and was six inches higher than the floor... The pulpit platform rose from the altar platform about four feet and was back from the altar platform edge about four feet. The pulpit platform was eight feet from the rear wall and about 12 feet across in front. On the side at the rear were the stairs on either side. On the sides and across the front of the platform were recessed panels, one on each side and three in front—the center one larger than the other two. It was painted dark red almost black. On this platform was the pulpit, a large sofa and reading desk. The pulpit was box like, about three feet square, standing on a pedestal about four feet above the platform with steps on one side and a gate to keep the preacher from falling out. This pulpit was only used for the sermon and prayer after the sermon;

¹ "Anniversary Booklet of St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church, 1790-1990," 15; information provided by Stanton Dietz as relayed to him by his grandfather, Isaac Deitz, who was 25 years old at the time the church was built in the mid-1830s. Of his grandfather Stanton Dietz wrote "He was much interested in the building and visited it every time he came to the village to see how it was coming along."

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all other parts were conducted from the reading desk. This was a table two feet wide on top and about six feet long, covered with red velvet. The legs of this table were of a massive type about six inches square with a red edged panel on each side; between the two front legs was a scroll cut out design of a lyre in the center of other scrollwork for a form of a screen.²

The auditorium, as presently constituted, in some measure portrays the 1890 remodeling campaign. That work included the alteration of the circulation scheme and pew plan, inclusive of new curved back pews, a new liturgical center, new larger paned clear sash, the reworking of the gallery posts—these were “turned down from eight inches to about six inches in diameter” by Dietz’s account—the reworking of the chimneys and installation of new coal-burning stoves, the installation of carpeting, the reworking of the gallery railing to improve sightlines, and the alteration of the floor to a single level. In 1968 the present ground-floor pews were installed to replace the 1890s ones, a number of which now occupy the gallery. It was also in that year that the metal railing that spans the gallery was installed.

As presently configured, the entrance vestibule is divided into a pastor’s office (west side), a small closet (east side), between which is the principal gathering area. The gallery stair is to the right of the entrance, against the south wall, and is original to the 1830s building campaign. It is an open stringer staircase with original turned newel post, square balusters, and handrail. The closet door and associated trim are also representative of the original building campaign, the door being of a four-panel type with original lift hinge and butt hinges; the door mouldings, and that of the surrounding back-banded architrave, are of a characteristic flat Greek Revival-style type, the latter having a beaded interior edge. The door into the auditorium consists of double-leaf five paneled doors; although representative of the 1890s reworking, the back-banded casing is from the original campaign and matches that of the closet door (it was presumably consolidated and reused from the two earlier entrances). Above the door is a commemorative panel noting details of the original construction campaign. A moulded wood chair rail separates a faux paneled dado from the plaster walls above; the ceiling is presently fitted with acoustic tiling.

The auditorium has two ranks of pews, eight each to other side of the central aisle. They are of a slip type with square ends and angle inwards towards the east and west walls, just beyond where the gallery posts are aligned. The wall treatments match that in the vestibule, with a molded chair rail dividing a faux paneled dado from the plaster wall above. The ceiling is also plaster on lath, and centered within it is an unadorned circular medallion from which a chandelier is suspended. The rear wall originally contained four windows, two to either side of the gallery (one each at floor and gallery level); these proved problematic to worshippers and were closed off in the 1890s. The rear wall is adorned by a large stained glass window set within an arched opening—once an exterior window it is now subsumed within the social hall and is visible there. Flooring is covered with red wall-to-wall carpeting.

The three-sided gallery, accessed by means of the vestibule stair, appears to largely reflect alterations made to it in 1890 and 1968. It has a simple four-band architrave, a faux paneled face, and a terminal moulding above which is modern metal railing. Unfluted columns with simplified capitals and plinths sustain it. Historic images indicate it once had a paneled face and projecting moulded cornice. The gallery has sloping floors and the pews situated there date from the 1890 renovation. The door to the vestibule stair is an original 1830s six-panel door with Greek Revival-style mouldings, a flat back, and an associated back-banded architrave.

The stained glass windows that are presently installed supplanted two generations of clear sash windows and were added in 1904. The pulpit window, so-called, features two larger panels with smaller circular-shaped

² Ibid, 15-16. “The pulpit was gone before my time,” Deitz recounted; as for the black hair cloth upholstered sofa, “in 1878 or 1879 [it] was replaced by three pulpit chairs... My grandfather, Isaac Deitz, bought this sofa and put it in the parlor... and is now owned by Mrs. Deforest W. Ingerham of Athens, Ohio.”

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medallions and flanking lancets; it commemorates the memories of Rev. Adam Crouse and Rev. A.P. Lunden; the remaining 21 smaller windows were presented in memory of members of the Reinhart, Zeh, Bogardus, Sand, Van Auken, Frink, Shultes, Deitz, Warner, Ball, Hasbrouck, Bassler, Tompkins, Sheldon, and Schoonmaker families, in addition to the Luther League and Sunday School. The 16 windows, eight each on the east and west walls, are set in wood panels with round-arched heads and are of an art glass type with lead coming. These window openings nevertheless retain their original Greek Revival-style moulded and beaded surrounds.

The social hall largely presents as a contemporary building following renovations made in more recent times. It includes a large gathering space at first-story level off of which open four rooms, among them the pastor's office and a kitchen, the latter which occupies the northeast corner. Finish treatments here, excepting the five-panel door that accesses the auditorium, are non-historic. The finished basement presently houses a thrift shop.

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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.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

ARCHITECTURE

SOCIAL HISTORY

Period of Significance

ca. 1835-1904

Significant Dates

ca. 1835-36; 1845; 1890; 1904

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Wolford, John; McDonald, John: builders, 1835-36

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.

Period of Significance (justification)

The cited period of significance, ca. 1835-1904, encapsulates all those physical changes made to the nominated building that have been deemed architecturally significant in the context of this nomination. The attached social hall, which has been considerably modified since its ca. 1915 construction, is thus excluded.

Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)

Criteria Consideration A has been cited; the building was built as—and continues to function as—a house of worship.

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Narrative Statement of Significance

Synopsis

St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church, which since 2009 has operated as the Helderberg Evangelical Lutheran Church, is a cornerstone of the Berne community and a building of considerable architectural and historic interest to both the town and to the greater Helderberg region. Begun in 1835 and completed and dedicated in May 1836, the church remains this rural Albany County hamlet's most impressive work of nineteenth-century architecture, as manifested in its overall scale, brick construction, and tall bell tower. The first work of brick architecture in the immediate area, the nominated building was constructed under the auspices of builders John Wolford and John McDonald, using brick which was prepared and fired on a nearby farm and with locally sourced timber and plank. Its design recalls traditional Protestant meetinghouse models as developed by the first decades of the nineteenth century under Wren-Gibbs influence, with a rectangular-shaped plan, gable entrance, separate lower and upper window units, and a multi-stage bell tower; the preeminent interior concern was a well-lighted auditorium with seating at floor and gallery level, the balance of the plan being given over to a narrow entrance vestibule across the front of the building. While modified and renovated at multiple points during its history, the building nevertheless retains its basic interior spatial layout and many design features reflecting its original mid-1830s construction date, at which time the Greek Revival style was gaining widespread acceptance in rural areas of New York State. In addition to its considerable local architectural importance, the building is additionally significant for its direct association with the anti-rent agitations of the 1840s, during which time the efforts of the Van Rensselaer family to collect back rents on perpetually leased lands from tenant farmers in Albany County and elsewhere were met with concerted resentment and resistance. Berne was among those areas deeply affected by anti-rent sentiment, and in January 1845 the building was chosen as the meeting site for the first Anti-Rent State Convention, at which time the movement began to assume a formal organizational structure and political goals. It is being nominated under NRHP Criterion A, in the area of Social History, for its direct association with the Anti-Rent War, and also under Criterion C, in the area of Architecture, as an impressive specimen of masonry religious architecture built during the 1830s in rural Albany County.

Historical Context

The Town of Berne is one of Albany County's four so-called "Hill Towns," along with Knox, Rensselaerville and Westerlo; all are situated among the raised landforms of the Helderbergs, which rise prominently in the western portion of the county. Horatio Spafford described Berne in 1824 as "a Post Township... The situation is elevated, on the height of land between Albany and Schoharie counties, and the surface much broken by the Helderberg Hills."³ Formal organization occurred in 1795, at which time the town was raised from lands previously contained within the adjacent Town of Rensselaerville. Berne assumed its present boundary in 1822, at which time the north half was partitioned off to create a new and separate township, Knox. The eponymously named hamlet of Berne, within which the nominated church is located, is one of the denser areas of settlement within what is otherwise a sparsely populated rural area.

Settlement of this region of western Albany County was initiated in the middle of the eighteenth century. The earliest settlers were largely of Palatine refugee lineage, thereby lending Berne its distinctive German, or "High Dutch," character. Early in its history Berne, spelled Bern variously, was known and referred to by the name "Beaverdam." Its lands were situated within the Manor of Rensselaerwyck, and as such they were not owned outright by those who improved and farmed them, but were instead subject to perpetual leases and yearly rents paid to the Van Rensselaer family. The first settlers were in effect squatters, as rents in this region were

³ H.G. Spafford, *A Gazetteer of the State of New-York* (Albany, NY: B.D. Packard, 1824), 49.

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not collected until after 1787, at which time surveys were undertaken of the Van Rensselaer land holdings above the Helderberg escarpment. Save for the massacre of the Dietz family in 1781 by Native Americans loyal to the British crown, Berne was largely buffered from the military events of the American Revolution, which included the widespread destruction of the nearby Schoharie Valley and the village that bears that name. While some area residents supported the English cause as Loyalists, much as in the Schoharie Valley, others joined the American cause, anticipating that victory might mean release from their perpetual tenancy of Van Rensselaer lands. Instead, the newly established government of New York honored the lease contracts of the patroons, thereby setting the stage for the agitations which came to a climax during the 1840s. "The lands are held by durable lease from Stephen Van Rensselaer, Esq. subject to an annual rent of about 10 to 14 bushels of wheat for 100 acres," Spafford wrote of Berne in 1824; "The inhabitants are principally Farmers, of domestic habits, and who manufacture the most of their clothing in their own families."⁴

The first Lutheran religious services conducted in Berne were administered by Dominie Peter Nicholas Sommer, a missionary pastor and native of Hamburg, Germany who served as pastor in Schoharie from 1743 to 1789. As noted in Sommer's own journal, his missionary work in Berne included services he conducted there in February 1765: "I preached for the first time in Johannes Zeh's house and administered the Lord's Supper." Formal incorporation of the Berne church, first known as the German Lutheran Congregation of Rensselaerville—or what was recorded in Van Rensselaer family lease records as the Lutheran High Dutch Church— occurred in 1790, at which time Christian Zeh, Christian Sand and Frederick Wormer were elected as trustees, their positions being subsequently confirmed by Henry Kniskern and Philip Werner in November of that year. While its date of erection is not definitively known, the first dedicated Lutheran meetinghouse was constructed in Berne prior to 1800—probably by 1798—on land leased to the church's trustees by Stephen Van Rensselaer in July 1797. That building was located near or otherwise within the old burial yard situated between the hamlets of Berne and East Berne, on Lot 564 of the Manor of Rensselaerwyck, a 71-acre parcel that also included an existing saw mill on Fox Creek. The organization's earliest records, beginning in the 1790s and continuing until 1802, were recorded in the German language, an indication of this locale's insular ethnic composition. The first settled pastor was the Rev. Heinrich Ludolph Sparck, who was preceded briefly by Rev. August Friedrich Meier following the group's 1790 formal incorporation. The organization was subsequently known as Zion Lutheran Church and only later, in the 1830s, assumed the name St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church.⁵

During the early nineteenth century the ethnic and cultural complexion of the community became less homogenous as the early Palatine German families who had first established farms there were joined by new settlers, among them New Englanders and people of Scotch-Irish and Dutch extraction, who arrived in the region as a result of successful promotional activities by the patroon. It was presumably as a consequence of this shifting demographic and the community's decreasing insularity that the English language was adopted as the church's official language.⁶ This increasing population meant more congregants and ultimately required the construction of a more amply sized meetinghouse, that being the nominated building.

Architectural Context

The nominated building, built 1835-36 and erected during the pastorate of the Rev. Adam Crouse, portrays distinctive aspects of the traditional Protestant meetinghouse type; in stylistic terms, it was constructed when the Greek Revival style was proliferating throughout rural New York State and replacing the Roman-inspired

⁴ Ibid

⁵ "Anniversary Booklet," 6, 13; Harold Miller, account of the First Lutheran Church of Berne as published in the *Altamont Enterprise*, 1 August 2002.

⁶ Ibid

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Neoclassicism of the preceding three decades, known popularly as the Federal style. The church was the first brick masonry building erected in Berne and, as such, the organization may have looked to the Lutheran church at Schoharie as its model, though that building was hardly new, it having been erected nearly 40 years earlier and about the same time as the Berne group's frame house of worship. The contractors responsible for overseeing the Berne church's erection in the 1830s were identified as John Wolford and John McDonald; while nothing is presently known of either of these builders, it might be presumed that one served as master mason and the other as lead carpenter for the building campaign.⁷ By one account the building cost \$8,000 to erect and had a seating capacity of 60 when completed, though the latter figure may well be inaccurate.⁸

Given the complexity and cost of delivering building materials to a remote Helderberg location in the 1830s, it comes as little surprise that construction material was sourced locally and much of the building's finish work was crafted on-site. The brick masonry would've required a considerable amount of time to prepare before construction of the superstructure was initiated; prior to firing, the clay would have been tempered and then moulded and air dried. By Stanton Dietz's account, as relayed to him by his grandfather, Isaac, the clay (and presumably the sand) required to mould and fire a suitable quantity of brick for the project was sourced on the nearby farm of Peter Bassler. Once the brick-maker's work was complete, "a bee was held and all the brick was hauled to the church site in one day."⁹ Once the masons had completed laying up the brick superstructure the carpenters saw to the framing out of the roof and then turned their attention to completing the interior. Wood elements such as doors, window sash, and pews and pew doors were crafted on site by finish carpenters.¹⁰ A limited amount of material that could not be sourced locally, inclusive of window glass and hardware, would have been procured elsewhere.

In choosing a model for a new edifice to replace the ca. 1797 building—which remained in service for a time after the May 1836 dedication of the nominated building—it is likely that the Berne organization looked to nearby Schoharie for inspiration. These two locations shared strong bonds at an early date, as both were settled predominately by Palatine Germans. The Lutheran church there, St. Paul's, was built ca. 1796 and is a brick-walled building with engaged bell tower; while erected much earlier, the durability and permanence of its brick walls likely still held a strong appeal and represented a considerable upgrade over wood-frame construction. The Berne church was built on a rectangular plan, its worship space being nearly square, with a broad gabled roof and symmetrically composed fenestration. Unlike the Schoharie church, which employed a central engaged bell tower, the Berne church's tiered tower rises from the roof ridge, a configuration that became more customary in the 1830s in response to the new design mandates of the Greek Revival style. The front-facing gable is fully pedimented, its central fanlight representing a "holdover" feature common in the earlier Federal style. Also representing a more conservative approach is the treatment of the lower and upper gallery windows as separate units, as by this time their execution as a single vertical band was becoming increasingly commonplace. Corner quoins, presumably of wood, appear in early views of the building but no longer remain, and again speak to conservative design mandates (it also appears wood was used to simulate cut-stone lintels where, instead, brick jack arches were employed). Although the principal cornices remain indebted to the Federal style and have yet to assume the full-blown character of the Greek Revival style, the upper stages of the tower feature broad corner pilasters more in keeping with the new idiom. The interior woodwork is also more in keeping with the newer style, as expressed in panel configuration and moulding profiles, and was presumably drawn from period builder's guides. The image one gathers from the building's

⁷ John Wolford may well be the same John Wolford, Junior (b. 1787) who resided in later years in the Town of Knox, Albany County, and who died in 1848; there was a carpenter by the name of John W. McDonald residing in the Town of Wright, Schoharie County in the 1850 federal census.

⁸ Hamilton Child, *Gazetteer and Business Directory of Albany & Schenectady Co., N.Y., for 1870-71* (Syracuse: Journal Office, 1870), 120-21.

⁹ Dietz account, "Anniversary Booklet," 14.

¹⁰Ibid.

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original physical features is that of a transitional architectural vocabulary with both traditional and progressive design elements; in that regard it provides considerable insight into the state of architecture in Berne in the mid-1830s, with its blend of provincial and more forward-looking features.

Viewing it within a broader context, St. Paul's demonstrates the development of the Protestant meetinghouse type as it evolved under Wren-Gibbs influence and during the stylistic transition from the Federal to the Greek Revival style. Regardless of its various stylistic and physical features, the basic design intent remained the same as it had some 40 years earlier when the Schoharie church was built, that being the delivery of the spoken word by a minister, facilitated by good natural lighting, sound acoustics, and clear sightlines. The windows at the rear of the building proved problematic to congregants, and, as such, their blinds were left closed and these bays were ultimately sealed off during later nineteenth century renovations.

The year 1890 witnessed a number of significant modifications to the building that were executed using funds raised by the Ladies Aid Society and required the church's closure from May to November of that year. New semi-circular pews were installed, a new dais was installed, and the original windows were replaced; in addition, the circulation pattern between the vestibule and worship space was modified, carpeting was installed, and changes were made to the gallery. In 1904 additional changes were made, among them the installation of new stained-glass windows which replaced the clear sash installed in 1890. Of these the *Altamont Enterprise* noted "The new windows in the Lutheran church are very nice and add much to the appearance of the church."¹¹ Finally, ca. 1915, the social hall was added to the rear of the building; it has been much enlarged and altered since this time and no longer reflects its original early twentieth century historic characteristics.¹²

St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church, Berne & the Anti-Rent War

The Anti-Rent War, also referred to as the Helderberg War, was a period of civil insurrection that centered on the collection of back rents for leased lands from tenant farmers by the Van Rensselaer family. This historic episode was initiated with the 1839 death of Stephen Van Rensselaer III, the patroon of the Manor of Rensselaerwyck, a vast upper Hudson Valley land holding which had been granted to the first patroon, Kiliaen Van Rensselaer, in 1629. Since its creation, lands within the manor were owned outright by the Van Rensselaer family and leased to tenants; the vast majority of these were farmers who were obligated to pay an annual fee of agricultural products and labor to satisfy their lease obligations. Stephen Van Rensselaer III, known by tenants as "the good patroon" and the last lord of the manor, had done much to improve the settlement of the family's lands while at the same time maintaining ownership and the longstanding lease-fee structure. His will directed his heirs to collect the manor's outstanding debts from leaseholders in order to pay his personal debts, amounting to approximately \$400,000, thereby setting the stage for a period of unrest in rural areas of the Hudson Valley contained within the Van Rensselaer family's land holdings. These agitations soon spread to other counties beyond those contained within the bounds of the Manor of Rensselaerwyck, among them Delaware and Schoharie counties, where similar feudal land-lease arrangements existed and were soon challenged by means of civil disobedience and political activity.

Attempts to collect deferred rents by agents of the Van Rensselaers were greeted with considerable resistance and hostility by tenants, and these sentiments ultimately coalesced into a political movement—the Anti-Renter party—which held considerable sway in New York State politics during the second half of the 1840s. Most of the Van Rensselaer tenants, such as those residing in Berne, could not afford to pay the amounts demanded, nor could they secure favorable terms, and after failing to obtain pecuniary relief by means of the state's legal system, they revolted against the system. Both Berne and the nominated church share strong associations with

¹¹*Altamont Enterprise*, 16 December 1904.

¹²Changes as noted in "Anniversary Booklet," 18-22.

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this rural movement as it developed an organizational structure from its grassroots beginnings. The first large-scale meeting of tenant farmers was held in Berne in July 1839, at which time a committee was formed to approach the principal heir, Stephen Van Rensselaer IV, an effort which failed to yield the desired result. In January 1845 a more considerable event was staged, as 150 delegates from 11 New York State counties assembled at Berne in St. Paul's—the first Anti-Rent State Convention—to call for political action.

While political means ultimately accounted for the demise of the tenant-lease system, some farmers took matters into their own hands and engaged in clandestine activities meant to stifle the efforts of rent collectors and law enforcement officials. Many Anti-Renters masked their identities with colorful calico “Indian” disguises and sheepskin masks with painted decoration and unusual features. They armed themselves with a variety of weapons and implements, among them knives, pistols, muskets, spears, and hatchets, in addition to farm tools such as scythes. Horns were used to warn others of imminent danger. Anti-Renters organized themselves into small “cells,” each independent of one another and commanded by a “chief,” and while in disguise used pseudonyms such as Big Thunder, Black Hawk, Red Wing and Pompey to conceal their true identity. Conflicts between the Anti-Renters and agents of the Van Rensselaer family typically centered on resistance to law enforcement activity, legal actions such as the serving of papers, and forced property sales.

Leaders of the revolt were held accountable for their actions and were tried for their roles in 1845, among them Dr. Smith Boughton, known as Big Thunder, who was tried, ultimately found guilty, and sentenced to life imprisonment for his role as a leader in the movement. Although the first trial failed to yield a guilty verdict, the second trial, which included a fist-fight between the lead counsels in open court, ended in Boughton's conviction. When called upon for comment Boughton indicated that “he had done nothing contrary to the institutions of his country as he understood them.”¹³ Boughton was ultimately pardoned by Governor John Young, whose campaign had been supported by the Anti-Renters party and who had indicated his desire to pardon incarcerated Anti-Renters if elected.

Berne was among those areas of Albany County where anti-rent sentiments ran highest and where support for the movement was considerable. The following account, which chronicles the efforts of law enforcement to capture two prominent Anti-Renters in Berne, offers a sense of the tensions that existed at the time between anti-rent advocates and law enforcement representatives and agents of the Van Rensselaer family:

On Sunday night, about 8 o'clock, a posse of 21 policemen left [Albany] for Bene, among the Helderberg Mountains, with warrants against certain parties charged with felony, in resisting the execution of the law, and tarring and feathering E.M. Fish on the 23rd April last. The police were armed to the teeth, and were instructed to arrest the accused at all hazards. They arrived at the residence of the principal persons, named Turner, about 4 o'clock this morning, and, surrounding the house, demanded an entrance. This sudden surprise was totally unexpected, and a refusal to comply with the demand followed. After waiting a half hour, the police broke in the door, and after a thorough search found the two Turners secreted in the garret, when they were arrested, handcuffed, and it being daybreak, and the horns being sounded, thereby warning others of danger, the police started for Albany. For 18 miles the Anti-Rent Indian signals were heard, and a large force followed after the posse for several miles, when suddenly it was discovered a barricade had been erected across the road, of sleighs, wagons, &c., and a demand for the delivery of the prisoners was made. The answer returned was, to take them at their peril; each policeman drawing a loaded revolver, as evidence of what might be expected. The Anti-Renters not liking this sort of argument, dispersed after swearing vengeance against the offices. The barricade was removed, and at half past 3 o'clock this afternoon the police arrived in this city with their prisoners, who are now in jail.¹⁴

¹³*New York Morning Courier*, 2 October 1845.

¹⁴“Exciting Capture of Two Anti-Renters,” *New-York Daily Tribune*, 24 February 1852.

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The convention held at St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church on the 15th and 16th of January 1845 was an important milestone in Anti-Rent War and one at which steps were taken to distinguish a collective political agenda from efforts of a more mercenary and lawless nature. "The proceedings of the convention were marked by an unlooked for degree of moderation and firmness," one nineteenth-century observer noted; "While condemning the lawless proceedings in many parts of the leasehold districts, they passed resolutions upholding the cause of reform in the land-tenure, and on February fifth, sent a committee with petitions to the Legislature at Albany."¹⁵ The following period account of the convention was published in the *Albany Argus* a few weeks after the event:

Anti-Rent State Convention

The Anti-Rent State Convention, pursuant to previous notice, convened at Bern on the 15th ult. It being ascertained that most of the delegates were in attendance, the convention was called together at the Lutheran Church, at 10 o'clock A.M.

The building, a large and commodious edifice, was soon filled to overflowing, many being unable to effect an entrance.

The convention was immediately called to order, and

Dr. F. Crouse, of *Guilderland*, was chosen President pro tem, and

Wm. Murphy, of New Scotland, Secretary.

It was then moved and carried that the delegates from the different Associations present their credentials and take their seats. It was ascertained that *eleven Counties*, and a much greater number of Associations, were represented.¹⁶

The counties represented at the Berne convention were Albany, Columbia, Delaware, Greene, Montgomery, Otsego, Rensselaer, Schenectady, Schoharie, Sullivan, and Ulster; from these a committee was formed consisting of one officer from each county. Additionally, another committee was formed to draft resolutions and select the best form of political petition. Following an adjournment, the convention reassembled and, after the selection of officers, the group was addressed by John Mayham of Schoharie; next Harvey Hamilton of the committee responsible for drafting resolutions presented the following:

WHEREAS—The time has arrived when it becomes necessary for us, as citizens and tenants, residing on manors [sic], claimed and leased by landlords under grants from *foreign Governments*, thus in a formal and public manner to correct false representations and misapplied constructions of the designs and purposes of the Anti-rent Associations in the various counties of this state. *Public functionaries*, and also the press, both powerful organs, have widely spread charges of combination of tenants for the secret purpose of hiring persons disguised as Indians, to set law at defiance, and obtaining *right by might*. When the public mind is abused, it is calculated to defeat the objects sought for, and tends to bring associations into disrepute—therefore we publically declare—before God and man—that no such combinations have been made within our knowledge or belief, and can exist only in imagination. The associations of tenants are for honorable and legal redress of grievances, to be obtained from the proper tribunals. The only services employed are legal counsels—the only expenses, those for publications, the attendance on courts and sessions of the Legislature. Over the acts of individuals the associations have no control, and therefore disclaim any accountability.¹⁷

¹⁵Edward Potts Cheyney, *The Anti-rent Agitation in the State of New York, 1839-46* (Philadelphia: 1887), 52.

¹⁶"Anti-Rent State Convention," *Albany Argus* 10 February 1845.

¹⁷Ibid

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The organization then was presented a series of resolutions—“which were passed upon severally, and adopted”— among them the boycott of publications which it felt misrepresented their positions, the disavowing of criminal activity, and the abandonment of traditional Whig and Democratic party lines in favor of political nominations made as “Anti-rent.” Next, the committee on petitions was announced, at which time a petition to the state legislature was presented and adopted, and ultimately an address made to the attendee’s fellow New York citizens, which closed with the following: “In this, we ask, nay, we demand to be heard and trusting in the righteousness of our cause, we rest fully assured that when our grievances shall be fairly and fully stated to our fellow citizens, they cannot without a generous sympathy, and a cordial co-operation with us in dispensing *equal justice* to all.”¹⁸

Following the Berne convention, the organization had a stronger structure and a defined political mission, and in 1846 arguably reached the height of its influence politically; it was that year that it helped John Young, a Whig, win the New York State governorship. After that point, political infighting and partisan agendas led swiftly to the demise of Anti-Renter influence in the state legislature. The last expressly anti-rent newspaper, the *Albany Freeholder*, ceased publication in 1851, and in 1852 the organization failed to convene at the state level. However, by this time, the efforts of the Anti-Renters had been successful in the dismantling of the tenanted estate system in New York State, thereby marking it as one of the great national populist movements of the nineteenth century.

Conclusion

St. Paul’s Evangelical Lutheran Church in Berne, Albany County, remains a building of distinguished historical and architectural pedigree. Since its completion in the mid-1830s, it has remained among the hamlet’s preeminent works of architecture, and its direct associations with the Anti-Rent War offer an additional layer of significance and saliently connect it with an episode of great consequence in Berne’s antebellum history.

Developmental history/additional historic context information (if appropriate)

¹⁸Ibid

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9. Major Bibliographical References

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

“Anniversary Booklet of St. Paul’s Evangelical Lutheran Church, 1790-1990.”

Cheyney, Edward Potts. *The Anti-rent Agitation in the State of New York, 1839-46*. Philadelphia: 1887.

Child, Hamilton. *Gazetteer and Business Directory of Albany & Schenectady Co., N.Y., for 1870-71*. Syracuse: Journal Office, 1870.

Spafford, H.G. *A Gazetteer of the State of New-York*. Albany, NY: B.D. Packard, 1824.

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): _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 8.91 acres
(Do not include previously listed resource acreage.)

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	<u>18</u> Zone	<u>570485</u> Easting	<u>4719671</u> Northing	3	<u> </u> Zone	<u> </u> Easting	<u> </u> Northing
2	<u> </u> Zone	<u> </u> Easting	<u> </u> Northing	4	<u> </u> Zone	<u> </u> Easting	<u> </u> Northing

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary for this NRHP nomination is shown on the enclosed mapping, which was drawn at a scale of 1:24,000, 1:12,000 and 1:4,000. All maps are entitled “St. Paul’s Evangelical Lutheran Church, Berne, Albany Co., NY.”

Boundary Justification

The boundary has been drawn to include two adjacent tax parcels, both of which are historically associated with the church organization and the cited period of significance. No additional or “buffer” land has been included within the cited boundary.

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11. Form Prepared By

name/title William E. Krattinger
organization NYS Division for Historic Preservation date May 2016
street & number PO Box 189 telephone (518) 268-2167
city or town Waterford State NY zip code 12180
e-mail William.Krattinger@parks.ny.gov

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:

PHOTOGRAPHS by William E. Krattinger, April 2016; TIFF file format, original digital files maintained at NYS Division for Historic Preservation, Waterford, NY.

- 0001 EXTERIOR, church, perspective view looking to northwest; social hall at rear
- 0002 EXTERIOR, social hall and church, view looking roughly west
- 0003 EXTERIOR, west elevation, view looking north showing window grouping
- 0004 EXTERIOR, south façade, detail view showing Flemish bond brickwork and portion of gauged brick lintel
- 0005 INTERIOR, worship space, view looking to northeast from gallery
- 0006 INTERIOR, worship space, detail view of gallery face and column
- 0007 INTERIOR, vestibule, commemorative plaque over entrance into worship space
- 0008 INTERIOR, vestibule, detail view of staircase to gallery showing newel turning, balusters and handrail
- 0009 INTERIOR, attic, view looking north showing king post roof truss system

Property Owner:

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

name Helderberg Evangelical Lutheran Church
street & number same as nomination address telephone _____
city or town _____ state _____ zip code _____

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.).

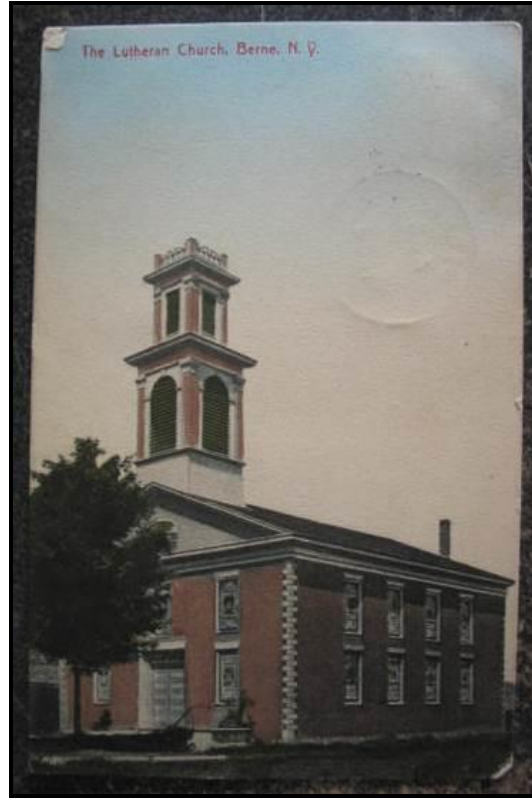
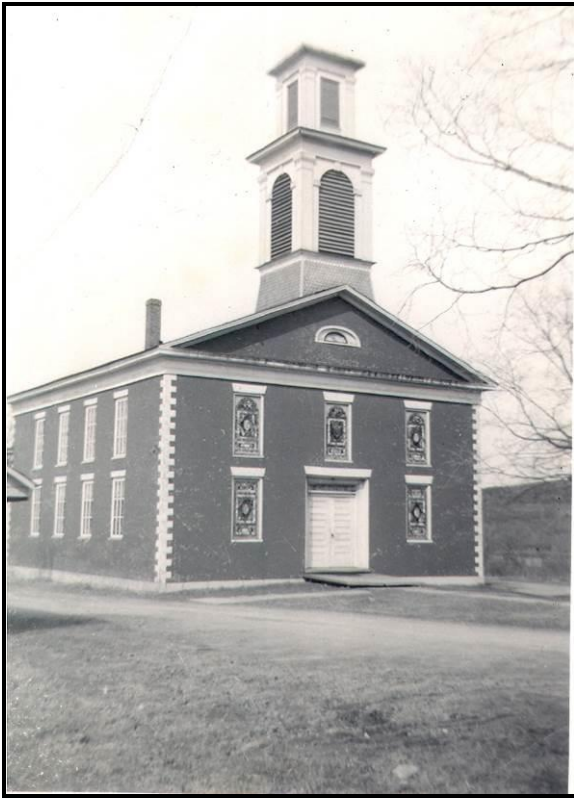
Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

ST. PAUL'S EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

Name of Property

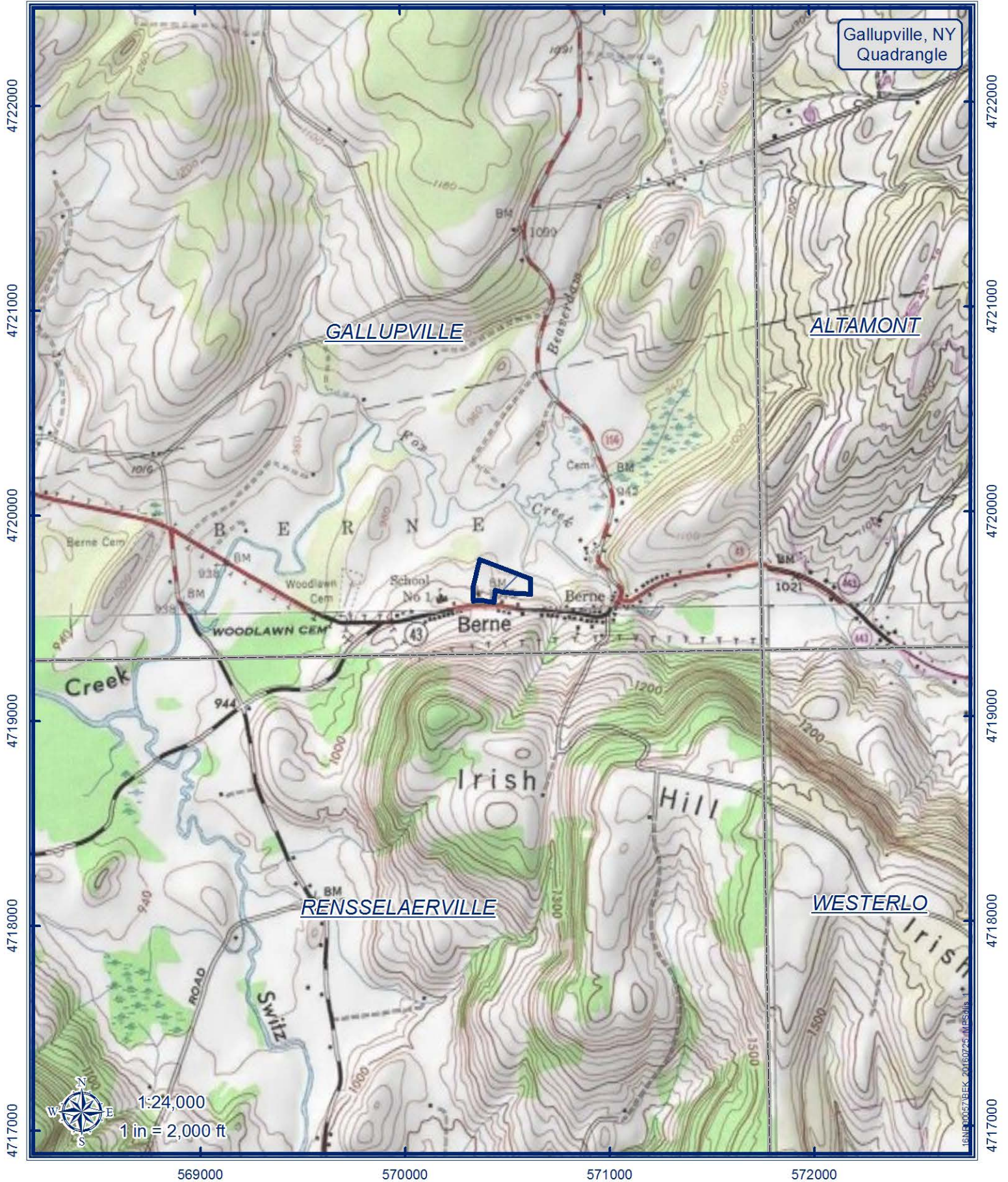
ALBANY CO., NEW YORK

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ABOVE & BELOW, historic images (note quoins at corners in early views of church exterior)





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



Parks, Recreation
and Historic Preservation

4721000

4721000

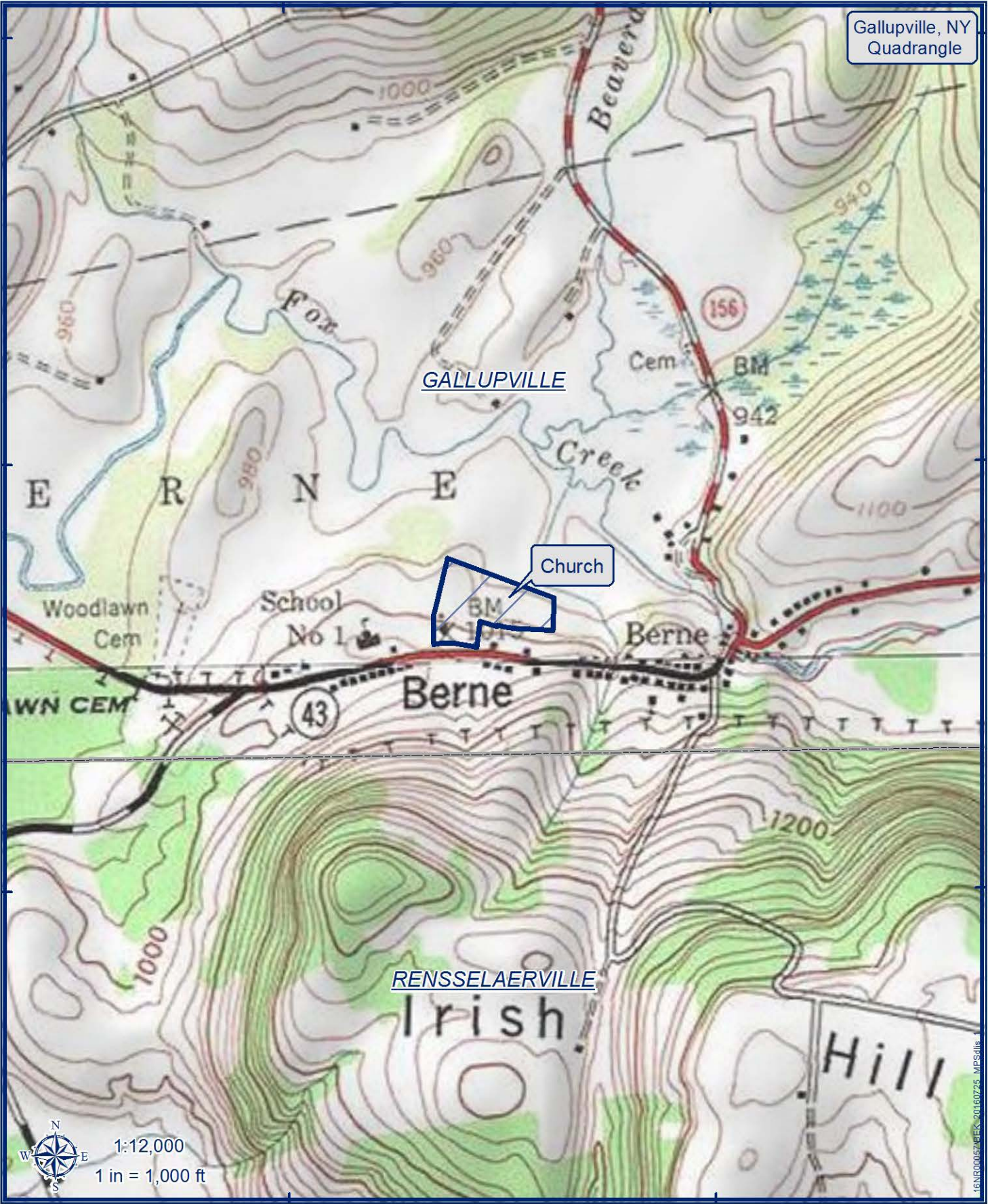
Gallupville, NY
Quadrangle

4720000

4720000

4719000

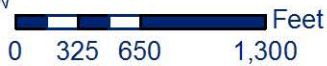
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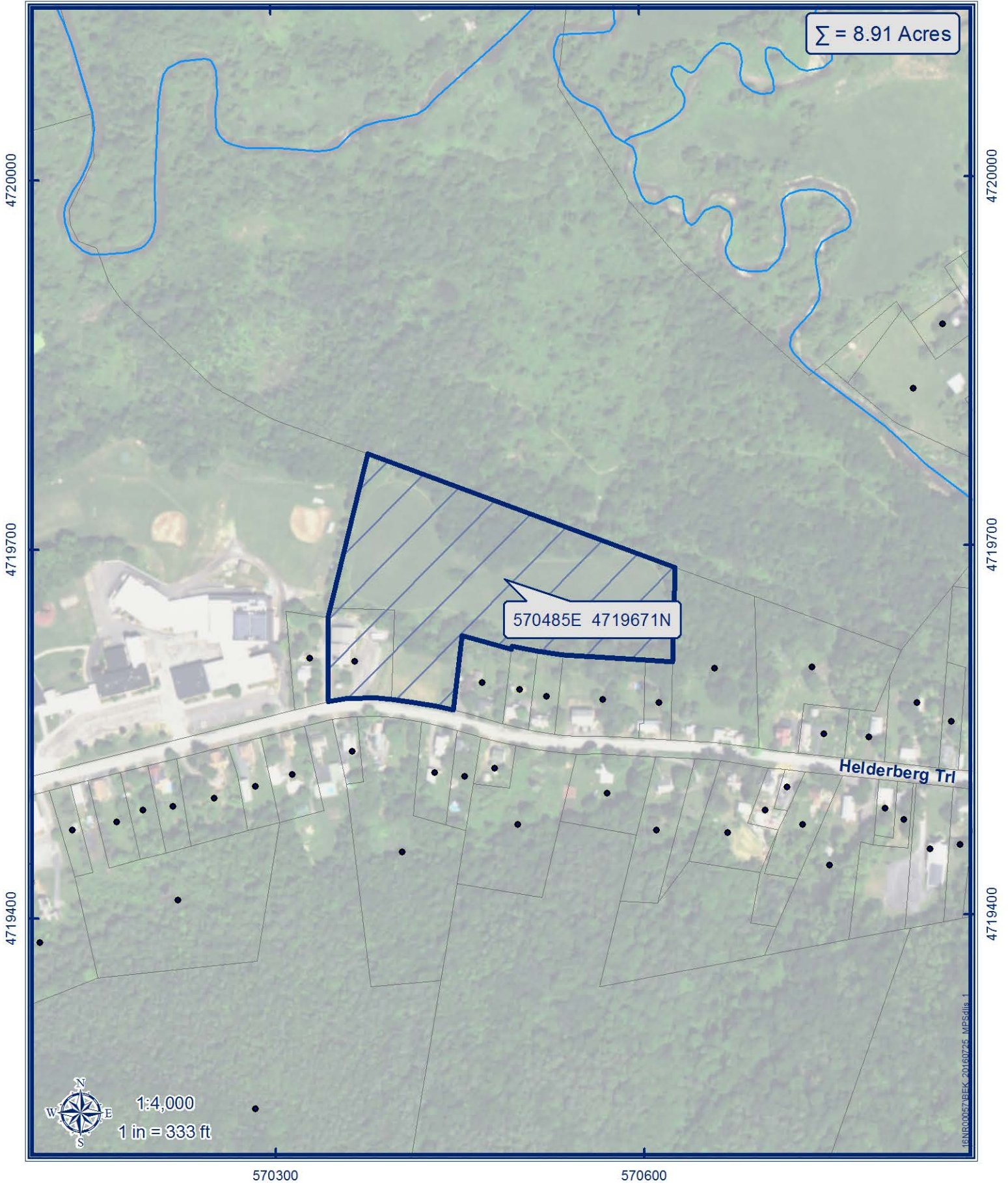
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571000

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



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and Historic Preservation



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



Parks, Recreation
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*This Edifice was Erected, by the Evangelical
Lutheran Congregation of Bern; A. 1835,
REV. ADAM CROWNSE PASTOR,*

<i>Johannes Shaefer,</i>	}	<i>Trustees.</i>	<i>Christopher Engel,</i>	}	<i>Building Committee</i>
<i>Christopher Engel,</i>			<i>Peter Sandt,</i>		
<i>Peter Sandt,</i>			<i>Alexander Crownse</i>		
	}	<i>Builders.</i>	<i>John Wolford,</i>		
			<i>John M^cDonald,</i>		

How amiable are thy Tabernacles; O Lord of Hosts, Ps. LXXXIV.





UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church
NAME:

MULTIPLE
NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: NEW YORK, Albany

DATE RECEIVED: 9/19/16 DATE OF PENDING LIST:
DATE OF 16TH DAY: DATE OF 45TH DAY: 11/04/16
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 16000751

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N
OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N
REQUEST: N SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: N NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT RETURN REJECT 11.2.16 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

Entered in
The National Register
of
Historic Places

RECOM./CRITERIA _____

REVIEWER _____ DISCIPLINE _____

TELEPHONE _____ DATE _____

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N

If a nomination is returned to the nominating authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the NPS.



**Parks, Recreation
and Historic Preservation**

ANDREW M. CUOMO
Governor

ROSE HARVEY
Commissioner



14 September 2016

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 two nominations, both on disc, to be considered for listing by the Keeper of the National Register:

St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church, Albany County
Newton-Taber-Marvin Farm, Rensselaer County

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