1926

United States Department of the Interior National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form



NATION OF REGISTER

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines* for Completing National Register Forms (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

. Name of Property			
	Baptist Church and Cemetery		
ther names/site number Sout	h River War Memorial Free Publ	ic Library	
. Location			
treet & number 64-66 Mair	Street	NAM	ot for publication
ity, town South Rive			cinity
	de 034 county Middlesex	code 023	zip code 08882
. Classification			
wnership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources	within Property
private	X building(e)		ncontributing
public-local	district	1	buildings
public-State	sits		altes
public-Federal	structure		structures
	object	1	objects
	00)001		0 Total
ame of related multiple property	listing	Alumber of contribution	ng resources previously
NA	neung.	listed in the National	
NA		isted in the national	Ladieral —
Signature of certifying official Assistant Commis State or Federal agency and bure In my opinion, the property	meets does not meet the National Reg	storic Resource	Date S/DSHPO
Signature of commenting or other	official		Date
State or Federal agency and bure	a u		tha
. National Park Service Ce	rtification	entered in	alata
hereby, certify that this property entered in the National Register. See continuation sheet. determined eligible for the National Register. determined not eligible for the National Register. removed from the National Register, (explain:)	ational sheet.	Syen .	1/7/9 =
			-
	fc Signature of t	the Keeper	Date of Action

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions		
Govern	mental office	
Cemetery		
		
Materials (enter categories from instructions)		
foundation	fieldstone	
	cedar shingle	
,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,	clapboard	
roof	asphalt-shingle	
	wood trim	
	Govern Cemete	

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Old School Baptist Church and Cemetery, located at 64-66 Main Street, South River, is a two story, three bay, square plan, wood frame, vernacular church building. Located on the southerly side of the main thoroughfare of the Borough, several blocks west of the South River, the building was originally constructed as the first church of what was then known as the village of Washington. Built c. 1805, the church is a meeting house in form and substance, with little ornamentation. Originally built to face the river, its orientation was changed when a pedimented portico was added to its north facade around 1862, reflecting the changed focus of the town, from riverfront to Main Street. The church cemetery is situated behind the building on a small plot of adjoining land.

The clapboard-clad main (north) facade of the building is articulated by a two story, pillar-supported pedimented portico. The four, square pillars, trimmed with a simple moulding at the top and bottom, rest on concrete blocks set on a concrete platform. The pillars are built of four boards framing barked cedar tree Below the triangular pediment is a plain frieze, painted black with a gold inscription, "South River War Memorial." center bay contains the main entrance to the building, enclosed within a small, projecting, glass-paned vestibule. The end bays contain a single, fixed pane sash window on the first and second floors, enclosed within a single, Roman ogee moulded wooden enframement but separated between the floors by a section of wood with nailed-on horizontal and vertical muntin-like strips. first floor windows have 30 panes, the second floor have 25. slate stone step leading to the front porch is engraved with the initials "B.B." and the date "July 2, 1862." It is not known to whom these initials belong.

8. Statement of Significance					•			
Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:								
Applicable National Register Criteria	XA	□в	Χc	□D	#	egic Monte C		
Criteria Considerations (Exceptions)	XA	□в	□с	XD	E	□F	□G	
Areas of Significance (enter categories Religion Art	es from in		•		Period o 1805-		ficance	Significant Dates 1805 1832 c. 1862 1922
					Culturai N/A	Affiliati	ion	
Significant Person					Architec Unkno		er .	

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

The Old School Baptist Church and Cemetery are significant in the area of Religion (Criterion A) as the first and oldest church and cemetery in South River, and as one of the only remaining satellite churches established by the First Baptist Church of Hightstown at the end of the 18th century. The property is also significant in the area of Art (Criterion C) for the John Frazee sculpted monument in the cemetery.

Under the spiritual guidance of Reverend Peter Wilson of Hightstown, a small congregation of Baptists had gathered in Washington (South River) by about 1785, and by 1786, deacons of the First Baptist Church of Hightstown were preaching regularly (Craig 1987: III-25). Land for the construction of the Old School Baptist Church and Cemetery was purchased in 1799 by the "Trustees of the Baptist Congregation," comprised of Abraham Buckalew, Joseph Cheeseman and John Ball, from local residents Thomas Robinson and Henry Obert (Middlesex County Deeds 8 256). The congregation joined the Philadephia Baptist Association in September of 1804. The church was constructed in the following year (Selover 1958: vol. 3, 630).

The Old School Baptist Church is one of the only remaining satellite churches set up by the First Baptist Church of Hightstown during the last decade of the 18th century. The churches of the period at Hightstown, Trenton, Hamilton Square and Pemberton are gone; it is likely that the churches at Manasquan and Jacobstown are no longer extant. The church at Penns Neck, listed on the State and National Registers in 1989, was substantially rebuilt during the 1870s (Craig 6/18/1991: personal correspondence).

	See continuation sheet
Previous documentation on file (NPS): N/A	
preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67)	Primary location of additional data:
has been requested	State historic preservation office
previously listed in the National Register previously determined eligible by the National Register	Other State agency Federal agency
designated a National Historic Landmark	X Local government
recorded by Historic American Buildings	University
Survey #	Other
recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #	Specify repository: Borough of South River
10. Geographical Data	
Acreage of property	ick, NJ Quad
UTM References A 1:8 55:2 4:4:0 4:4 7:7 7:2:0 Zone Easting Northing C 1:	B Zone Easting Northing D
	See continuation sheet
Verbal Boundary Description	
The site on which the church and cemetery are Main Street, Block 161, Lots 8, 21, 21.02 and	
	See continuation sheet
Boundary Justification	·
The boundaries are based on the legally record associated with the Old School Baptist Church	ded lot lines that have historically been and Cemetery.
	See continuation sheet
11. Form Prepared By	
name/title Ulana D. Zakalak/Historic Preservation	
organization Zakalak Associates stree: & number57 Cayuga Avenue	date _July 25. 1991 telephone _(908) 571-3176
city or town Oceanport	state New Jersey zip code 07757

9. Major Bibliographical References

See Continuation Sheet 9.1.

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The portico pediment and the soffits have been covered with narrow vinyl siding within the last ten years. Originally, the entire building was clad with clapboard. Now, the remaining three elevations are covered with cedar shingles, over the original clapboards. Fenestration consists of six-over-six double hung wood windows with exterior storm sash, set in simple, Roman ogee moulded wooden enframements. These windows and their surrounds appear to be original to the church. The two-story facade windows with their applied stickwork panels are late 19th century replacements. The building is surmounted by an asphalt-shingle clad gable roof and rests on a fieldstone foundation with no basement.

The east elevation was the original facade of the church, prior to the installation of the portico, c. 1862. Consisting of three bays, the center bay served as the original main entrance to the building. This entrance, with its replacement security door, opens into a narrow corridor leading off to the dog-leg stair on the north, an entrance to the central space directly ahead, and a minister's entrance on the south, leading to the pulpit area. The stairway leads to the second floor "U"-shaped balcony.

Between the two first-floor windows of the rear (south) wall of the church is a one story, concrete block furnace room, added in the late 1950s to enclose the new hot water heating system. The addition is fenestrated by a three-pane window on its south and west walls, and by a simple wood door in its east elevation. A brick chimney rises from the asphalt-shingle clad shed roof. The west elevation, the rear of the original church, is articulated by two widely spaced bays.

Interior

The building is entered through a door in the west wall of the small, enclosed vestibule, which projects from the facade of the building. A pair of wooden doors leads into the central space, approximately 33' by 33' square (the building dimensions are approximately 34' x 39'). Mid-way along the east wall of the nave, is a glass paned door leading into a narrow, four-foot wide corridor beyond, which spans the entire length of the building. Originally, the corridor led to the balcony stair on the north end and the minister's entrance on the south end. Although the original stair still exists, the southern half of the corridor

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immediately south of the entrance door, was enclosed to provide a restroom and a closet when the building was converted into a public library, c. 1923.

The nave is approximately square in plan and relatively open except for the presence of four square pillars supporting the upstairs balcony. The balcony is arranged in a "U" shape, facing the south wall. Originally, the pulpit was located along this wall. The opening on the second floor made by the balcony has been closed by the addition of a false ceiling utilizing the top of the balcony rail as its support. The balcony was closed to conserve heat probably when the 1950s heating system was installed.

The perimeter of the second floor is used for storage and for a small, private television studio on the east side. The bulk of the space is taken up by the elevated platform created by the enclosure of the balcony opening.

Interior finishes include plaster walls and ceilings and wood floors. The wood window surrounds on both floors are ornamented with a single quirk bead, a characteristic late 18th/early 19th century moulding. After the building was taken over by the Borough in 1979, the ground floor was divided into office spaces by the addition of 30"-high wood partitions. A large bronze plaque honoring "The Boys Who Served in The Great War" is attached to the south wall of the church.

The Old School Baptist Church is set back 25' from the remaining buildings along Main Street and has a small grassy area in front of it. To the west of the centrally located walkway is a monument honoring the dead of World War I. The monument to the east honors the dead of World War II, and the Korean and Vietnam conflicts. Originally the setting of the church was more open and rural with trees and a picket fence delineating the northern perimeter of the churchyard (undated, late 19th century photograph at the South River Public Library). Built on a slight elevation west of the river, the church might have had an open vista to the river. The church became boxed-in with surrounding buildings in the early 1920s when the church trustees sold off lots to raise money.

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The building is in relatively good condition and possesses a moderate degree of integrity. Much of the 1805 church remains. The building is still on its original fieldstone foundation and possesses original walls, original facade (east elevation) minus the entrance door (replaced with a metal security door), balcony, stairs, floorplan, interior partition, windows, window surrounds, and possibly some of the interior finishes.

The most severe alteration occurred in 1862, when the orientation of the building was changed with the addition of the pillar-supported portico to the north facade. This alteration should be viewed as a reflection of the growth of the borough, from a small village on the South River, to the commercial/institutional expansion of the town along Main Street in a westerly direction. Originally built on the outskirts of the 1805 village of Washington, the orientation of the building was changed after the developing town passed the church site.

Some of the other alterations probably occurred as a result of the changed use of the building in 1922, from a church to a public library. At this time, the bathroom and closet in the southern half of the corridor were installed, the balcony opening was enclosed, and a new hot water heating system was added in the 1950s. Other changes were made in the late 1970s, when the Borough of South River took over the building for office use. At this time the waist high partitions were added in the nave and the portico and soffits were clad with vinyl siding. It is not known when or why the clapboard on the east, south and west elevations was covered with cedar shingles, although the shingles appear to be of this century. Full length shutters were also removed.

The Cemetery

The Old School Baptist Church Cemetery is the oldest graveyard in the borough of South River. It served as the only cemetery in the area until 1851, when Monumental Cemetery, located on Gordon Street south of the Central Business District, was opened (Selover 1958: vol. 3, 630). It is best known for the classical urn sculpted by John Frazee, one of the first American sculptors, in memory of his wife Jane, who died from cholera in 1832. The

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cemetery grounds were originally larger; lots were sold off by the trustees of the Church in the late 19th century to raise capital (Selover 1958: vol. 3, 630).

The approximately 50 surviving tombstones are arranged in three parallel rows, running north-south. Most of the tombstones are severely deteriorated and difficult to read; some do not appear to be in their original position. The earliest legible date of death found was 1816, the latest was 1887. The predominate type of marker is a round- or segmentally-arched slab-type headstone with no or very little ornamentation. Family names are representative of the first families who settled in the area, and include Obert, Willett, Norman, Carson, Barkelew, Conover, Rue, Stults and Booraem.

Site

The site on which the church and cemetery are located is on the southerly side of Main Street, Block 161, Lots 8, 21, 21.02 and 30. The total acreage is approximately .21 acres.

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	, ago	Borough, M	iddlesex	County,	NJ	

The Old School Baptist Church was the only church in the village of Washington for nearly two generations. The church attracted members from not only the village but from Sayreville, Old Bridge, Spotswood, Dunham's Corner and East Brunswick. The church cemetery was also the only graveyard in the area until the Monumental Cemetery was opened in 1851 (Selover 1958: vol. 3, 634).

Around 1840, the church broke away from the Philadelphia Baptist Association and joined the Delaware River Baptist Association, a newly formed (1836) association of "Primitive" or "Old School" Baptists. Other churches within this new association included First and Second, Hopewell; Kingwood; Canton and Southampton, in Pennsylvania (Maring 1964: 135). The Primitive Baptists were characterized by fervent predestinarianism, and opposition to Sunday schools and missionary societies. Their meeting houses were plain, unornamented buildings, with a simple pulpit stand, hard benches and no painted or varnished surfaces (Armstrong and Armstrong 1979: 179-180).

The Delaware River Baptist Association met at the church in Washington (South River) for their annual meetings in 1845 and 1851. In 1845, the church had 40 members but no minister. By 1851, membership had decreased by one and the congregation was still without the benefit of regular clergy (Minutes of the Delaware River Baptist Association, 1845 and 1851). By 1876, a competing Baptist church was founded in Washington, with the name, "New Light Baptist Church" (Everts and Stewart, 1876: 18). Perhaps this church was set up by disgruntled former members of the Old School Baptist Church and was an eventual factor in the disintegration of the original church.

By the late 19th century, the congregation had dwindled to a handful of members (Selover 1958: vol. 3, 630). Beginning in 1920, the trustees of the church started selling off lots from the church property to raise capital, severely reducing the size of the churchyard from approximately one acre to one-fifth of an acre (Middlesex County Deed 682 337, etc. [thirteen separate transactions]). In 1922, the trustees of the church sold the building to the South River War Memorial Free Public Library

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Association for use as a free public library honoring the memory of the soldiers and marines of the First World War (Middlesex County Deed 775-351). The congregation retained a right to use the building for worshipping and holding meetings for five years from the date of the sale (Middlesex County Deed 775-351). In 1932, the last surviving member of the congregation, Anna (Emma) Martin, sold the last remaining lot (Lot 30) to the Library Association (Middlesex County Deed 1042 46). The building was maintained as a library until 1979, when a new library was built on Appleby Avenue. The church then became a municipal office housing the Borough Clerk's office, a function which continues today.

The Frazee Monument

The Old School Baptist Church and Cemetery are significant in the area of Art for the John Frazee-sculpted memorial to his wife Jane, who died in the 1832 cholera epidemic. Frazee was born in the upper village of Rahway, on July 18, 1780. At the age of 17, he was apprenticed to William Lawrence, a bricklayer and mason. In the summer of 1808, Lawrence received a contract to build a bridge over the Rahway River at Bridgetown. When the bridge was complete, Lawrence wished to have his name chiseled in a tablet of stone, with the date of the bridge completion. Frazee, although inexperienced in stone cutting, was permitted to cut the This tablet became the first chiseled work by Frazee. While with Lawrence, Frazee also worked as an ornamental stonecutter on a house for Peter DeWint Smith, near Haverstraw on the Hudson (Dunlap 1834 [Dover reprint]: 267).

In 1810, Frazee was sent to work as a bricklayer for John Sanford in New Brunswick, where he met Ward Baldwin, with whom he continued to study the art of hewing stone. Frazee married Jane, daughter of Garret Probasco of Spotswood in 1813. They purchased a small house in Rahway, and added a workshop for his stone cutting business (Dunlap 1834 [Dover reprint]: 268). In 1818, with his brother William, Frazee opened a marble shop in New York City, where he made mantels, tombstones, and church memorials. His post-mortem memorial portrait of John Wells, Esq., dated 1824, and placed in Grace Church, New York, was the first marble bust carved in this country by a native American (Johnson and

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Malone 1960: 2). Previously, the sculptures were molded in clay and sent to a foreign stone cutter to be reproduced in marble (The News Tribune, n.d., n.p.). Two years later, Frazee, together with 29 other artists, founded the National Academy of Design. Frazee was also responsible for carving the busts of Nathaniel Bowditch, Daniel Webster and John Marshall, among others, for the Boston Athenaeum.

In 1831, Frazee dissolved his partnership with his brother and joined with Robert E. Launitz, leading to the architectural commission for the New York Customs House, on which he served as architect and superintendent. This commission occupied him from 1834 to 1841. In the summer of 1832, when cholera was sweeping New York City, Frazee moved his family to Spotswood, home of his wife's family, hoping to avoid the pestilence. Frazee's wife, Jane Probasco, contracted the disease and died (Johnson and Malone 1960: 3). She was buried in the Old School Baptist Church Cemetery, the only graveyard in the area at the time.

NPS Form 10-000-0

United States Department of the Interior National Park Service

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	_	Old School Baptist	Church,	South River
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- 9. Major Bibliographic References
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Photographs

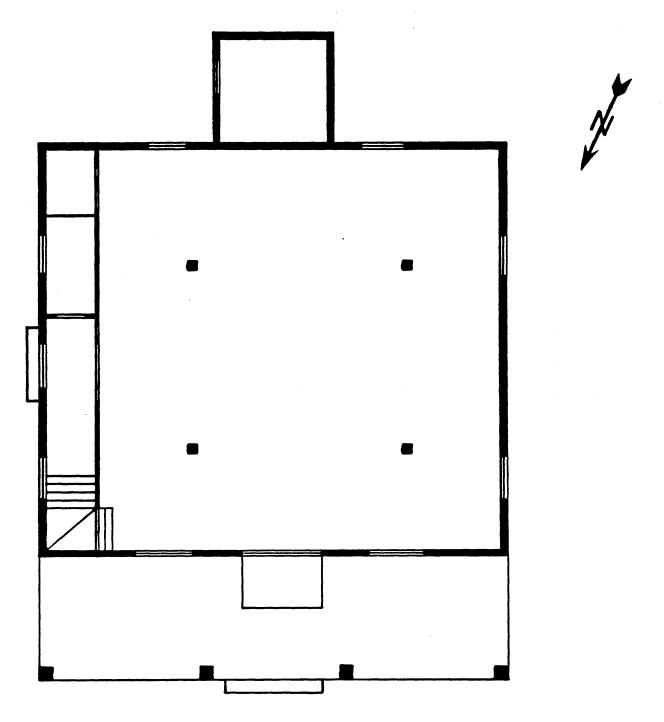
The following information is the same for all of the photographs listed:

- 1) Name of property: Old School Baptist Church and Cemetery
- 2) City and state: South River, New Jersey
- 3) Photo by: Ulana D. Zakalak
- 4) Photo taken: April 1991
- 5) Location of negatives: Zakalak Associates 57 Cayuga Avenue

Oceanport, New Jersey 07757

- 6) & 7) Descriptions of views indicating direction of camera:
- Photo 1 of 9: Main (north) facade of Old School Baptist Church.

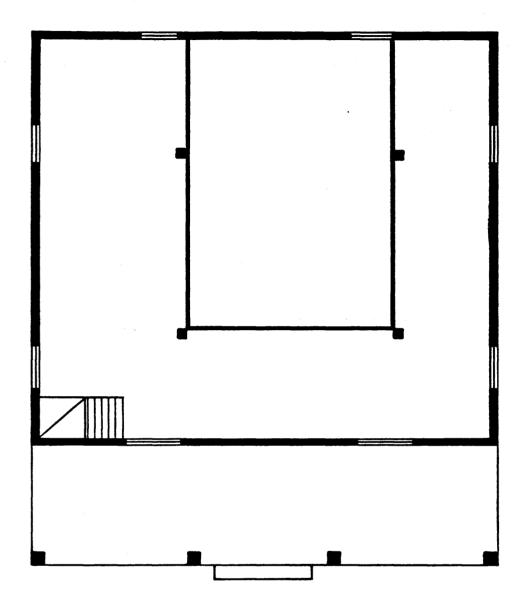
 Camera pointing south.
- Photo 2 of 9: East (original) facade of Old School Baptist Church. Camera pointing northwest.
- Photo 3 of 9: Rear (south) facade of Old School Baptist Church.
 Camera pointing northwest.
- Photo 4 of 9: General view of Old School Baptist Church Cemetery, Frazee urn is on the right. Camera pointing northeast.
- Photo 5 of 9: General view of Old School Baptist Church Cemetery, Frazee urn is in the center of the photograph. Camera pointing southeast.
- Photo 6 of 9: Jane Frazee monument, carved by husband John Frazee, one of America's first sculptors, 1832. Camera pointing east.
- Photo 7 of 9: General view of the interior. Camera pointing south.
- Photo 8 of 9: General view of the interior. Camera pointing southeast.
- Photo 9 of 9: General view of the interior. Main entrance is at left, stair to balcony at right. Camera pointing northeast.



FIRST FLOOR PLAN

1/8" = 1'

OLD SCHOOL BAPTIST CHURCH SOUTH RIVER, MIDDLESEX COUNTY NEW JERSEY



BALCONY PLAN

1/8" = 1'

OLD SCHOOL BAPTIST CHURCH SOUTH RIVER, MIDDLESEX COUNTY NEW JERSEY

