

1703

United States Department of the Interior National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only

received AUG 25 1988

date entered

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

1. Name

historic Dutch Reformed Church

and/or common First Reformed Church of New Brunswick

2. Location

street & number 160 Neilson Street NA not for publication

city, town New Brunswick vicinity of

state New Jersey code 034 county Middlesex code 023

3. Classification

Table with 4 columns: Category, Ownership, Status, Present Use. Includes checkboxes for district, building(s), structure, site, object, public/private, occupied/unoccupied/work in progress, accessible, agriculture, commercial, educational, entertainment, government, industrial, military, museum, park, private residence, religious, scientific, transportation, other.

4. Owner of Property

name First Reformed Church of New Brunswick

street & number 9-11 Bayard Street

city, town New Brunswick vicinity of state New Jersey 08903

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Record Office, Middlesex County Courthouse

street & number John F. Kennedy Square

city, town New Brunswick state New Jersey 08903

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title See continuation sheet. has this property been determined eligible? X yes ___ no

date ___ federal ___ state ___ county ___ local

depository for survey records

city, town state

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input 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 present structure of the First Reformed Church dates to 1812, although the crowning steeple is an addition from 1835. The church is in the classical Wren-Gibbs tradition established after the Great Fire of London in the mid-17th century. It features a rectangular plan, gable-end entry, and a steeple tower over the entry. This became the standard for American churches constructed from the latter 18th century until the 1840s, when the Gothic Revival style became popular at a vernacular level. The First Reformed Church, or Dutch Reformed Church, as it was often called in the past, is detailed in the Georgian-Federal classical tradition.

The exterior is made of regularly coursed fieldstone, accented by galleting in the joints. Galleting, or the ornamental arrangement of small stones within the mortar joint, is an unusual feature in New Jersey architecture, although it is a regionalism in the 18th-century architecture of the Chesapeake bay area, particularly Annapolis. The building's trim, including quoins, a beltcourse, window frames, and front steps, is brownstone. The brownstone used at the First Reformed was well chosen and cut, for it survives in excellent condition.

The two-story building is arranged with a pedimented gable facing southeast, originally with a view down Hiram Street of the bustling 19th-century market held there. The facade contains three identical entries on the first floor: double-leaf panelled doors set within round-arched frames marked by brownstone voussoirs and keystones. The round-arched windows above the doors have been replaced with stained glass, the tradition of placing such windows in the church as memorials having begun in 1891.

The rear of the church has two five-sided wooden enclosures, one a rear entrance and the other a tool shed. Tall arched windows, with louvered blinds permanently closed, rise above the enclosures on this elevation.

The projecting center bay on the facade, containing an oculus at the attic level, forms the base for a tall tower. It is stone to a height just above the roof ridge. Above it rises a three-stage wooden tower. The wooden steeple was designed by New York architect Martin E. Thompson, best known for the Second Bank of the United States on Wall Street, the facade of which is now the entry to the Metropolitan Museum's American Wing. The steeple of the First Reformed Church has the spare ornamentation and robust proportions of the Greek Revival style, although it complements the earlier classicism of the church quite well. The middle part of the steeple contains a clock, still functioning, which was placed there in 1828.

The dimensions of the church are 94 feet by 66 feet. The length of the side walls is marked by five regularly spaced round-arched windows on both the first and second floors. The multipaned sash have been replaced over the years, but they probably approximate the original configuration.

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		

Specific dates 1790's-1920's **Builder/Architect** Matthew Edgerton, Staats Van Deursen & John Clark; steeple by Martin E. Thompson c. 1835

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The First Reformed Church was established by Dutch settlers in the Somerset and New Brunswick areas about the turn of the 18th century, and its congregation is the oldest still worshipping in the city. The building dates from 1812, and is an outstanding example of the Georgian classical style translated into local building materials. The stone church is unusual in the use of galleting on the exterior mortar joints. Above it rises a steeple attributed to the architect Martin Thompson. Several early ministers of the church were also teachers and presidents of Queen's College, now Rutgers University. The church, with the town clock in its tower, is a traditional part of the community, and it continues to function as both a historical and physical landmark in the changing urban landscape of downtown New Brunswick.

The present First Reformed Church is the fourth of that denomination in New Brunswick. The congregation was formed around 1703 by Dutch settlers who were ministered to by visiting clergy, one being from Hackensack. Their place of worship was about three miles from the present site and was known as Three Mile Run Church. The congregation moved to a location in New Brunswick near New Street and the Raritan River around 1717, when the earliest surviving records began. The third church was built in the heart of the emerging city of New Brunswick in 1767 with a view toward the Raritan River, on the site still occupied today. Early drawings of the church indicate that it was a square-plan stone building in the "meeting house" tradition. It was capped by a pyramidal roof and pointed steeple in the center. The bell, which was imported from Holland, was installed in 1775, and was taken down and buried during the British occupation of New Brunswick.

Although services were halted from 1776-77 during the British occupation, city and congregation recovered and flourished after the Revolution. By the early 19th century, the existing church was too small. In 1811 it was torn down, and on September 27, 1812, a new church was dedicated on the site. Like its predecessor, the church was built with stone (the stone from the old church was used in its construction), but the structure reflected the potent influence of classical architecture on building since the mid-18th century. The church was carefully detailed with classically inspired elements, including keystones over the arched windows, and quoins at the corners. The two-story building could seat over 1,000 people, a considerable increase over the earlier capacity.

The pediment-fronted church apparently was built with a projecting center bay extending up to form a low tower. However, in 1828, modifications were planned for the tower so that it might contain a clock. In that year, the New Brunswick City Council appropriated \$500 "to install a clock in the steeple of

9. Major Bibliographical References

See attached bibliography.

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property 1.05 acres

Quadrangle name New Brunswick

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

A

1	8	5	4	7	2	0	0	4	4	8	2	6	2	0
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

Block 9, Lot 21 of the City of New Brunswick Tax Map. Bounded by Paterson, Neilson, & Bayard Streets & Church Alley.

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

state code county code

state code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Janet W. Foster

organization ACROTERION date January 1987

street & number 45-A Macculloch Avenue telephone (201) 984-9660

city or town Morristown state New Jersey 07960

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state 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 National Park Service.

Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer signature [Signature]

title Assistant Commissioner for Natural & Historic Resources date August 15, 1988

For NPS use only

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

[Signature] date 9/27/88
Keeper of the National Register

Attest: _____ date _____

Chief of Registration

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Dutch Reformed Church, New Brunswick,
Middlesex County, New Jersey

New Brunswick Inventory of Historic & Architectural Resources
1979
Office of New Jersey Heritage, CN 404
Trenton, New Jersey 08625

Hiram Market National Register Nomination
1978
Office of New Jersey Heritage, CN 404
Trenton, New Jersey 08625

Historic American Buildings Survey
HABS-NJ-716
Library of Congress
Washington, D.C.
1960

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Dutch Reformed Church, New Brunswick,
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The gable roof is finished with slate shingles. A molded cornice wraps around the facade and rear of the building to give the appearance of a closed pediment; an applied pediment accents the tower at the second-floor level.

The interior of the church was altered from its original appearance in 1847 and 1862, resulting in new pews, pulpit, and gallery. The encaustic tile floor of the vestibule probably dates from one of these remodelings. A fire in 1971 necessitated a new platform and pulpit area, which includes a nearly floor-to-ceiling blind Palladian window. The plain plaster walls and ceiling are finished with a classically inspired wooden cornice, restored after the fire. The fire destroyed all the stained-glass windows except those in the fanlights above the facade entries, and in the windows above the entries on the Neilson Street side of the building.

The U-shaped balcony, carried on wooden Doric columns, once extended to the back wall, but now stops short of it. The balcony is reached by curved, boxed stairs, one in each of the two vestibules that flank the center entry. These stairs and their vertical-board boxing appear to be original. A pipe organ, installed in 1942-43, occupies the rear balcony, its pipe hidden from view. Despite changes and minor alterations, the sanctuary retains the general appearance and feeling of the early 19th-century classical design.

The church property includes a small burying ground immediately surrounding the sides and rear of the building. The earliest standing tombstones are carved brownstone dating from the 1790s. There are also a variety of 19th-century markers, many of marble, which are indicative of the Romantic sensibilities of the time in their carving and verses. There are a few 20th-century granite markers. The cemetery is no longer used for burials. Church records indicate that landscape improvements undertaken in 1950-51 removed several severely damaged headstones, and added walkways and trees to the church yard.

The property is surrounded by a 19th-century fence of cast and wrought iron along the Neilson Street frontage of the church; a cast-iron fence from 1901 in front of the cemetery; and a contemporary chain-link fence to the northeast side and rear of the property.

The First Reformed Church complex also contains two other buildings - the Church House (1871-1872), an Italianate style building directly on the corner of Neilson and Bayard Streets; and the Sexton's House, on the corner of Bayard Street and Church Alley, which was built in 1886. The Church house is a two-story building with narrow joints, which are tinted red on the facade. The

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Dutch Reformed Church, New Brunswick,
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brownstone lintels and sills are showing signs of weathering and deterioration. The low-pitch gable roof includes pediments over both the front and west sides of the building; a corner tower marks the off-center entry.

The three-story tower contains paired windows, set in a recessed brick panel. The windows throughout the building are 4-over-4 false casement sash, a window type commonly found in Italianate buildings. The cornices of both the main building and the tower are made of brick, corbelled and recessed to form a repeating pattern of crosses.

The Sexton's house at 15 Bayard Street is a vernacular interpretation of the Shingle Style. It is a two-and-a-half-story structure, with shiplap siding on the first floor and imbricated shingles at the second-floor facade and in the gable. A small corner entry is recessed into the massing of the building; the corner support post has been replaced. A variety of window types grace the building; those on the facade are paired. The second-floor facade windows are within a pedimented dormer that extends through the molded eaves to become part of the wall. Multi-light casements light the attic; and an oculus over the corner entry adds to the decorative variety of the building.

Generally, all the buildings of the First Reformed Church complex are in a good state of repair, and retain a great deal of their original architectural fabric.

RESOURCES

<u>Name</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Contributing</u>	<u>Non-Contributing</u>
Church	1812	building	-
Church house	1872	building	-
Sexton's House	1886	building	-
Cast & Wrought Iron Fence	19th c. & 1901	structure	-
Chain Link Fence	modern	-	structure
Burial Ground	1790's - 1920's	site	-

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The First Reformed Church was established by Dutch settlers in the Somerset and New Brunswick areas about the turn of the 18th century, and its congregation is the oldest still worshipping in the city. The building dates from 1812, and is an outstanding example of the Georgian classical style translated into local building materials. The stone church is unusual in the use of galleting on the exterior mortar joints. Above it rises a steeple attributed to the architect Martin Thompson. Several early ministers of the church were also teachers and presidents of Queen's College, now Rutgers University. The church, with the town clock in its tower, is a traditional part of the community, and it continues to function as both a historical and physical landmark in the changing urban landscape of downtown New Brunswick.

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Although services were halted from 1776-77 during the British occupation, city and congregation recovered and flourished after the Revolution. By the early 19th century, the existing church was too small. In 1811 it was torn down, and on September 27, 1812, a new church was dedicated on the site. Like its predecessor, the church was built with stone (the stone from the old church was used in its construction), but the structure reflected the potent influence of classical architecture on building since the mid-18th century. The church was carefully detailed with classically inspired elements, including keystones over the arched windows, and quoins at the corners. The two-story building could seat over 1,000 people, a considerable increase over the earlier capacity.

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the Dutch Reformed Church." Such cooperation between the city and the church seems unprecedented, but the location of a clock in the church tower would provide a service to the city's central business district at the time, the Hiram Market, which spread out to the north of the church. One local history states that "the church edifice was further improved by the erection of a steeple in 1827 [sic], under the direction of Staats Van Deursen, Matthew Egerton, and Peter Spader, the amount expended being \$2725." (History of Union and Middlesex Counties, p. 701).

The design of the present steeple is credited to Martin Thompson, a New York architect best known for his work in the Greek Revival style. Thompson's most notable commissions included the Second Bank of the United States, in 1822-23, and in 1824, the Merchant's Exchange. He designed at least two churches, St. Mark's in the Bowery in 1829, and the Church of the Ascension in 1828, as a partner in the office of architect Ithiel Town. Thompson was acclaimed by his contemporaries, including Minard Lefever and Alexander Jackson Davis, and successful in his business.

Thompson's biographer suggests that it was the freak tornado in the summer of 1835 which wrecked the existing (1827-28) steeple. Church records do not mention the event, but a 1908 history of the city recounts that "On June 19, 1835, the town came near meeting total destruction by a tornado which . . . razed many buildings entailing a loss of over \$150,000." (The City of New Brunswick 1908, p. 35). It seems likely that the tall steeple may have been a casualty of the storm, and that as a result, Thompson was brought onto the job of rebuilding it. A later passage from the church's records suggests that the present steeple was built over an earlier structure, probably the steeple of Van Deursen, Egerton, and Spader. An entry for 1839 indicates that the upper, wooden portion of the structure was complete, and goes on to state "however, the original brick steeple is still in place and extends up beyond the clock so that the third or top section of the wood steeple is the only one which does not have a brick lining."

When Thompson took over the job of reconstructing a steeple for the First Reformed Church, there may have been resentment on the part of local carpenter-builders which prevented much publicity for the famed out-of-town architect. Thompson's own account book makes it clear that he worked for the church on a steeple, but whether only in preparing designs or supervising construction is unknown. The story of the various stages in the development of the present Greek Revival-style steeple has largely been lost, so that there are a number of

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misleading histories which report that the entire church tower and steeple were added to the existing building in 1828.

Alterations were made to the church throughout the 19th century, as befits a building in constant use. The interior was twice remodeled, once in 1847 when the galleries were lowered and a new pulpit installed, and again in 1862 when new pews and furnishings were added. Gas lighting was installed in 1850, to be replaced by electricity in 1917. The handsome iron fence topped by cast palmette and anthemion ornaments was installed in front of the church in 1843. In 1901 iron fencing built by the Hay Foundry Company of Newark was added. This fence is not as ornate as the earlier work, but it is nonetheless of good quality, and is marked by a spearhead motif.

The congregation had initially acquired only the lot on which the church stood, and the ground used for interments. The parcel was obtained through a 2,000-year lease from Philip French, at the rent of one peppercorn per year if demanded. Beginning in 1820, the church began to purchase adjacent parcels of land. In 1826, a "consistory house" was constructed on a newly acquired lot northwest of the church, on the corner of Bayard Street and the alley running behind the church property. This became known in later years as the "sexton's house" according to church records, and was demolished in 1885 to be replaced the following year by the Shingle Style cottage now extant.

In 1871-72, the Italianate-style "church house" was constructed on a lot west of the church, on the corner of Bayard and Neilson Streets. The building housed a lecture room and sabbath school, according to church records; it continues to serve the same purpose, as well as containing the church offices.

The first trained pastor of the church was Rev. Theodore Frelinghuysen, commissioned in 1720 by the Classis of Amsterdam to serve all the Dutch Reformed churches in Somerset and Middlesex counties. He served until his death in 1748. Rev. Frelinghuysen's descendants have been notable public servants in New Jersey.

During the 1740s and '50s, the Reformed Churches in America struggled to obtain independence from the mother church in the Netherlands, so they could train ministers in this country, and administer their affairs quickly and in their own manner. This was eventually realized, but not without causing great divisiveness within the church. Rev. Frelinghuysen, and later his successor Rev. Johannes Leydt, who was minister from 1748 through 1783, actively encouraged the independence of the American Reformed Churches, and they spent much time traveling to the Dutch communities in the Hudson Valley to spread their views.

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A royal charter was issued to the church by Jonathan Belcher, who was governor of the Province of New Jersey, on June 7, 1753, in the 26th year of the reign of King George II. Hendrick Fisher, who was the first president under that charter, was later elected president of the Provincial Congress, in May 1775.

Although the New Brunswick Church had a regular minister during the years of the revolution, services were entirely suspended during the winter of 1776-77, and legend has it that the British used the building as a hospital and a stable. The church building was damaged, but not destroyed as the New Brunswick Presbyterian Church had been, and so for a time the Presbyterian and Reformed congregations worshipped on alternate Sundays in the repaired church. In 1785, the Rev. Jacob Rutsen Hardenbergh was called to serve the church as minister. He did not arrive until the spring of 1786, when he also assumed the presidency of Queens College (now Rutgers University). He lived only until 1790, but in his brief stay he brought the church a solid organization and new confidence. He was the last minister to preach in the Dutch language, and from this date on all church records were kept in English. The change in language is just one indication of the cultural consolidation that began to occur in America after the Revolution. Hardenbergh's tombstone is immediately to the rear of the church, one of the oldest still surviving in the First Reformed churchyard, which contains the graves of a number of church leaders and Rutgers professors. Among these is John Henry Livingston, known as the father of the Reformed Church in America. Also interred there are victims of the War of Independence and the Civil War, including Captain James Schureman, who served in the former.

After Rev. Hardenbergh, there were a number of ministers of the church who also held positions at Queens College. His successor, Dr. Ira Condict, was vice-president of the college and professor of moral philosophy. Condict secured land for the expansion of the college, and it was he who initiated plans for the construction of the present church building. Ironically, he died the week the old church was demolished to make way for the new. His successor as vice-president of the college, Rev. John Schureman, eventually took over as pastor of the First Reformed Church, and from 1812-1815 he served as the first pastor in the new church building. A series of ministers served the church for relatively short periods until 1863, when Rev. Richard Steele was installed. Rev. Steele had an interest in the beginnings of the church in this country, and in the American Revolution. Much of the information known today about colonial New Brunswick and the early years of the First Reformed Church are due to his research and writing.

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Dutch Reformed Church, New Brunswick,
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The distinguished ministers who served the First Reformed Church and the handsome architecture of the building combine to make this an important part of New Brunswick's heritage.

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Dutch Reformed Church, New Brunswick,
Middlesex County, New Jersey

First Reformed Church Bibliography

Anonymous

n.d. Handwritten note concerning the laying of the cornerstone of the First Reformed Church chapel. On file at Alexander Library, Rutgers University, New Brunswick (New Brunswick File: Churches).

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Dutch Reformed Church, New Brunswick,
Middlesex County, New Jersey

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First Reformed Church

First Reformed Church Records. Ledger Accounts on file at Alexander Library Special Collections and Archives, Rutgers University, New Brunswick.

First Reformed Church

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First Reformed Church

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1926 New Brunswick First Reformed Church Baptisms, 1717-1820. New Jersey Historical Society Proceedings, Vol. XI. Newark: New Jersey Historical Society.

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Dutch Reformed Church, New Brunswick,
Middlesex County, New Jersey

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Stryker, Donald, James Black, and Alan Goodheart
1978 Walking Tour Map. Historic Hiram Market Preservation Association.

Stryker, Donald and David Muyskins
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