

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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RECEIVED SEP 30 1975

DATE ENTERED

OCT 7 1975

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

Fairfield (Gansegat) Dutch Reformed Church

AND/OR COMMON

Fairfield Reformed Church

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER

Fairfield Road

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Fairfield

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

11th - Joseph G. Minish

VICINITY OF

STATE

New Jersey

CODE

34

COUNTY

Essex

CODE

013

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

**CATEGORY**

DISTRICT

BUILDING(S)

STRUCTURE

SITE

OBJECT

**OWNERSHIP**

PUBLIC

PRIVATE

BOTH

**PUBLIC ACQUISITION**

IN PROCESS

BEING CONSIDERED

**STATUS**

OCCUPIED

UNOCCUPIED

WORK IN PROGRESS

**ACCESSIBLE**

YES: RESTRICTED

YES: UNRESTRICTED

NO

**PRESENT USE**

AGRICULTURE

COMMERCIAL

EDUCATIONAL

ENTERTAINMENT

GOVERNMENT

INDUSTRIAL

MILITARY

MUSEUM

PARK

PRIVATE RESIDENCE

RELIGIOUS

SCIENTIFIC

TRANSPORTATION

OTHER

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

Rev. John Hamersma & the Consistory of the Fairfield Reformed Church

STREET & NUMBER

Fairfield Road

CITY, TOWN

Fairfield

VICINITY OF

STATE

New Jersey

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,

REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Essex County Hall of Records

STREET & NUMBER

High Street

CITY, TOWN

Newark

STATE

New Jersey

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

New Jersey Historic Sites Inventory (#1072.2)

DATE

1972

FEDERAL  STATE

COUNTY

LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR

SURVEY RECORDS

Historic Sites Section, Dept. of Environmental Protection

CITY, TOWN

Trenton

STATE

New Jersey

# 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		

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## DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Fairfield Reformed Church is the third structure built by the congregation since its organization in 1720. The first and second edifices were located on the corner of Fairfield Road and Hollywood Avenue. They were built of mud, stones, and logs and were respectively square and octagonal in shape.

The overall appearance of the present church was adapted to English Georgian architecture possibly with the help of style books since the floor plan and the telescopic steeple are similar to those found in parish churches of London built by Wren and Gibbs. The Anglican influence can also be noted in the use of three portals emanating from the belief in the trinity of Christ. These doors can also be treated in a secular vein in that it was common for the deacons, elders, and regular church members to use the center door while the servants and slaves used the side entrances.

The entire church building is forty-six feet in length by forty feet in width. The rafter suspension and the truss design of the roof is of particular interest. It was constructed by the early church members using hand hewn beams of solid oak. These beams were affixed together with iron dowels and wooden pegs in a manner used in shipbuilding. According to one estimation, with the help of a large crane the entire roof structure could be raised in one solid piece without its disassembling.

At the front of the church on the South-West facade a wooden steeple rises approximately forty feet above the roof. The three major sections of the steeple are superimposed one on top of the other using classical elements such as engaged pilasters for decoration. The sound of the bell located in the first section resounds through louvered openings. The steeple is in keeping with the proportion and simple body of the stone edifice. It has been a visual symbol of our historic town to many residents and in recent years has been adopted as a part of the town's official insignia.

The early church members carefully selected the site for their church. It is situated on a knoll that gives the building an aura of justly deserved prominence since it was the focal point of the Dutch settlement. The exterior of the church is faced in brownstone which was the gift of the pastor, Rev. John Duryea. He owned a quarry in Little Falls from which the stone was obtained. It is interesting to note that when Richard Upjohn set about the task of building Trinity Church in New York City he chose to use the brown-

# 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input 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 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 1804-1808

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

In addition to being considered an outstanding example of early nineteenth century Georgian church architecture, the Fairfield Dutch Reformed Church, besides its intended overt religious significance, also served as a social, economic, and educational institution for the early Dutch settlers in western Essex County. As the core of the settlement, the Fairfield Dutch Reformed Church was within one mile radius of the homes of its founding members—the Van Nesses, the Deys, the Piers, the Vanderhoofs, and others—prominent landowners and small farmers alike whose religious congregation enabled them to worship God, to be educated, and to live together in a society.

## RELIGION/SOCIETY

The church's role in providing cultural continuity for its Dutch families through the dominie's preaching and teaching in Dutch was secondary to its religious mission. As with other Jersey Dutchmen, the focus in Fairfield in the early eighteenth century was the Reformed church. The family bible was read since it expressed the word of God, the ultimate voice of authority in the church. Believing in the Calvinist doctrine of election that the Lord would save all sinners who repented, the Fairfield Dutch led moral lives as a profession of their faith.

However, in a broader sense, the Fairfield Dutch Reformed Church moved beyond the lives of its members to profoundly contribute to the growth of education and government within the community. In 1760, the church donated a building on its site for the first public school in Fairfield, used at a later date for township committee meetings when Caldwell Township, made up of Fairfield and several of its neighboring towns in West Essex, was incorporated in 1798. In the absence of a local government, moreover, since the congregation's organization predates the township's by eighty years, the dictates of the church established law and order. The church's records from 1743-1833 are the only remaining census on the people living within western Essex and adjoining Morris County at the time.

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

## PRIMARY SOURCES

Barry, Rev. Charles, An Historical Survey of the First Presbyterian Church, Daily Advertiser, 1871.

Caldwell Township Committee Minutes, 1798.

# 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 2.75

### UTM REFERENCES

A 

1	8	5	60	4	6	0	45	2	5	9	6	5
ZONE			EASTING				NORTHING					

B 

ZONE			EASTING				NORTHING					

### VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

### LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

# 11 FORM PREPARED BY

### NAME / TITLE

Joseph Esposito (Chairman) Jacquelin Gioioso (Research Committee)

### ORGANIZATION

Fairfield Bicentennial Committee

### DATE

January 1, 1975

### STREET & NUMBER

P. O. Box 893

### TELEPHONE

### CITY OR TOWN

Fairfield

### STATE

New Jersey

# 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.

### STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

### TITLE

Commissioner, Dept. of Environmental Protection

### DATE

9/25/75

### FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

### DATE

10/7/75

### ATTEST:

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

### DATE

OCT 7 1975

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stone from the same Little Falls quarry because the superior material was deemed to be within practical hauling distance from New York. In the hardpan of sanearth and stone, a trench, three feet wide and three feet deep, was dug to form the footing for the brownstone walls. The trench was filled with sandstone of various sizes before the walls were raised. The elevation of the walls is some fifty-four feet to the roof sills. Workers took care to make the walls supporting the steeple six inches thicker than those framing the rest of the church. The stone blocks are precisely cut and dressed on the two primary facades of the church. The stones on the North-East facade surrounding the choir loft and those on the South-East facade facing the cemetery are roughly cut.

The most prominently noted builders of the church were Peter Sandford, David Van Ness, and John Kierstad who, were apparently Managers of the Church supervising construction as well as working as masons and carpenters.

It appears, however, that Moses Sigler was the master builder/mason as complaints concerning construction were taken to him. A large number of masons and carpenters were working beneath Sigler; many of them members of the congregation.

The window fenestration is composed of two parallel sets of five windows cut into both the South-Eastern and the North-Western walls. Romanesque arches are used in the upper windows and sedgement arches are incorporated into the lower windows. The windows, of which the bays are two feet in depth, contain gothic arched segments of greenish-blue colored glass. In the mauve coloration of several of the upper level windows one can observe the effects of sun bleaching that have resulted over the years. It should be noted that the glass in the windows while being a considerable age was not part of the original construction. The first windows were pale yellow. Three romanseque arched windows are situated directly above the doors. Above these windows are three smaller circular windows. The rising sun motif in the window over the central portal was a typical element used in Georgian and Federal architecture of the period.

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As one enters the main portal he finds himself standing in a simple vestibule that is nine feet in length by eight feet in width. There are two staircases stemming off the vestibule on either side which lead to the gallery or balcony as it is sometimes referred. The staircases are three feet in width and retain the original wall paneling. Hand-hewn oaken beams used to construct the floor are clearly visible in the gallery. These beams vary in length but they are all roughly eight inches in width. The builders of the church adzed the beams only on two sides leaving the other two, bark and all, in the rough. There are three sets of pews on each side of the gallery parallel to it facing the center aisle of the church. These pews are situated on three different floor levels, the two rear levels being higher than the one nearest to the railing. There is ample room for additional people to walk behind the uppermost pew. The scroll-like arms of the narrow pews in the gallery are the same as those in the lower portion. Their only difference lies in the fact that the sides of the pews in the balcony are left plain while the corresponding facet of pew construction in the lower section is decorated with carved linear molding to form a rectangle. Originally, the lower section of pews had doors attached to them at either end along the aisles. A wrought iron protective screen is attached to the railing of the South-Western side of the gallery in front of the entrance to the steeple. The North-West, South-East, and South-West sides of the balcony are uniformly nine feet deep and form a U-shaped frame around the upper portion of the church's interior. The length and width of the balcony parallel those of the entire structure. Eight federal unfluted slender columns rise from the ground level to support the gallery.

The curved beams of the ceiling construction were precisely adzed to receive thin strips of wood nailed to the rafters in the process of lathing. The expanse of the barrel vault ceiling is comprised of coffered metal sheets that are most likely tin. An octagonal lantern located in the center of the ceiling once held a chandelier suspended to the level of the gallery. The lighting fixture was at the end of a rope which ran over two pulleys, one was mounted above the ceiling and the other in the steeple. The weight of the chandelier was counterbalanced by a bucket of sand tied to the end of the rope located in the steeple.

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The main floor plan consists of two three foot wide side aisles and a four foot wide center aisle between which are located two sets of pews. The two sets of main pews are ten rows deep and fifteen feet wide. There are two groups of double pews on each side of the chancel and two groups of triple pews along either of the side portals.

In comparison to the Pompton Plains and Little Falls Reformed Churches, neither of which are the original church structures, the Fairfield Reformed Church had only one minor alteration, the addition of the choir loft. The choir loft extends ten feet from the North-East wall of the church. It was added during the 1880's. A large romanesque arch decorated at each end with clusters of carved leaves frames the chancel. Two comparable gothic-arched stained glass windows were installed at the rear of the chancel. The left window, in memory of Col. Alois F. Repa, depicts Christ as the shepherd and the right window, in memory of David Evans, is a representation of the resurrection of Christ. According to a Reformed church doctrine, the word of God is always the center of authority over every ruling body of the church necessitating the placement of the pulpit in the center of the chancel wall. The Church has a movable piece of gothic-styled church furniture serving as the present pulpit. The former pulpit was removed during the addition of the choir loft. There is eight foot high vertical wainscoting surrounding the choir loft and extending into the sides of the church where it comes up to the bays of the windows about three feet from the floor. A rectangular, blocked wainscoting on either side of the triple entrance doors is believed to be work done prior to the choir loft addition.

Next to the Church the original public school room of Fairfield is incorporated into a late 19th century wooden building which also houses a meeting hall and the pastor's office. A cemetery which predates the church and the school is located in the area to the rear of both buildings. Graves in this cemetery dating from the early part of the eighteenth century are the final resting place for many members of the congregation, some of which helped build the church.

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As is indicated by Thomas Ball's 1766 map Fairfield which denoted the main road as "the road which leads to the church," so intertwined is the early history of the Fairfield Dutch Reformed Church and its community. Fairfield, the oldest village in West Essex, was first known as Gansegat, (Dutch for "duck's pond"), then as Horseneck, during the English predomination, and as Caldwell Township, which reflects the Revolutionary fervor. Deeds from 1679, 1701, and 1703, show that Fairfield was settled by the Dutch at least twenty years before Englishmen from Newark laid claim to the same land. Ensuing land disputes precipitated the Horseneck riots against the English proprietors, from 1740 to 1745, a rebellion which was one of the first signs of discord against British sovereignty in the colonies.

Among the parties to the Horseneck riots were Dutch settlers, such as Simon Van Ness, who founded the Dutch Reformed Church in 1720. As the first organized religion in West Essex, the Fairfield Dutch Reformed Church was the fourth Dutch Reformed Church in northeastern New Jersey, after Bergen, in 1660, Aquackanonck (Passaic), in 1690, and Ponds, in 1710. That Fairfield was a branch of Aquackanonck Church in its formative years is attested to by the Aquacknonck Church Tablet which lists the baptisms of Fairfield Church members. In 1754, Fairfield Church established its independence when records indicate that Aaron Kiersted's child was baptised at Fairfield.

The affinity between the Fairfield and Aquackanonck Reformed Churches was part of the interrelationship among the other Reformed churches in the vicinity before 1748. A dearth of ministers caused a consolidation of all the region within Pompton, Pompton Plains, Ponds, Preakness, Montville, Fairfield, Little Falls, Totowa, and Paterson. Preachers who served this circuit included Dominie William Bertholf, founder of the Dutch Reformed Church in New Jersey, Dominie Henricus Coens, called from Holland in 1725 to serve Aquackanonck and Second River (Belleville), Dominie Johannes Van Duessen, the first reformed minister not ordained in Holland, and Dominie David Marinus, who served Aquackanonck and Totowa.



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A dispute between the progressivists and the traditionalists led to a schism in the Reformed church in America. The Conferentie party, who favored ordination of ministers in America, broke away from the Coetus party who recognized ordinations only in Holland. The Conferentie party took control of the Totowa, Fairfield, and Montville churches, uniting them under the direction of Rev. Cornelius Blauw. In 1772, Fairfield, Pompton Plains, and Totowa called for Rev. Hermenus Meyer from Kingston, New York. In 1785, Rev. Meyer was replaced by Rev. Matthew Leydt of Second River.

Frequent changes in ministers during the Coetus-Conferentie conflict with the Reformed church creates some ambiguity in the early records; yet, it is probable that Fairfield was served by most of the Aquackanonck pastors until 1760, and occasionally by those of Second River, particularly, G. DuBois and C. VanSantford. Fairfield's first resident pastor was apparently Rev. John Duryea, a colonial activist who was imprisoned by the British for inflammatory speech. Succeeding Rev. Leydt, Rev. Duryea initiated the building of the present church by donating the brownstone from his quarry in Little Falls. Rev. Duryea is also credited with establishing the Little Falls church in 1823, which had belonged to the Fairfield parish.

Although several fires over the years have burnt primary records, including a fire started by an allegedly insane pastor in 1873, we know from other sources that prior to 1800, the Fairfield congregation met in a building located at the junction of Hollywood Avenue and Fairfield Road. Destroyed by fire, it was replaced with an octagonal log church in 1744, which was probably used even beyond the construction of the present meeting house. As one of the earliest churches in the area, Fairfield influenced the organization of the Boonton, Montville, Pompton Plains, and Little Falls Reformed Churches.

Building the brownstone church is recorded in the Fairfield Church Account Book, which was kept "for the eye of the Managers for building Fairfield meeting house and to keep the Accounts of S. house in---." The Account Book refers to "the Kiersted tract", corroborating that the Kiersted family donated land for the church's site to the consistory in 1801. Subsequent entries fall into three periods, the first of which, from 1804 to 1808, covers the

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start and near completion of the building. These early entries show how families within the congregation pledged money through "Subscriptions" to pay for "the common laboring work." Masons and carpenters were employed to "furnish the church", lay the joists, "split the lath," install the "glass boxes," etc. Yet, more vital to its construction were David Van Ness, Abraham Vanderhoof, Peter Sandford, and John Kiersted, very likely the managers referred to in the flyleaf who "tended the masons," and joined other church members in carting the many bushels of lime, "crotched boards," and pine planks.

A lack of entries between 1808 and 1817 gives validity to reference to internal dissension during the church's construction. The absence of entries, coupled with Rev. Duryea's departure in 1817, indicates that the church was reorganized that year under a new pastor, Rev. Ava Neal.

Within the time span of 1817-1819 when repairs were begun on the building is a disgruntled note from the managers admonishing Moses Sigler for not building a pulpit in Fairfield as was found in the Pompton Plains Church, thereby "disgracing all other work in Said Church" and incurring the added expense of "paying another workman to pull down the pulpit...put up another." The managers were so exasperated with Sigler that their final rendering of his account, with seven deductions for paying workers in his employ, concluded: "there will be a balance due to the Church of \$5.59."

The last notations, from 1819 to 1833, list the sale of "scaffold poles", "vendue of the Oald Church," possibly the octagonal structure, rents charged for choice pews and "sittings in the gallery," and final rendering of subscriptions and dues with interest.

The church's tract of land has been enlarged from time to time, as recently even, as in 1926. However, most often mentioned as giving or selling land to Fairfield church were the Kiersted's, whose homestead one-half mile down the road still stands. In 1832, the Kiersted family sold land to the elders and deacons of Fairfield church, for \$100.00, a site to be used solely as burying grounds. It can be assumed

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from the Kiersted's insistence upon using the land for a cemetery and the fact that some of the tombstones are earlier than the deed, that the site was used years before to bury members of the church.

While the church in its inception was largely comprised of Dutch families, a more ethnically diverse membership in the twentieth century led to a change in name to the Fairfield Reformed Church. It should be noted, though that those industrious and God-fearing Dutchmen whose names appear on the first baptismal records and in the Account Book, the Vanderhoofs, the Van Nesses, the Courters, have descendants still living in Fairfield today.

The Fairfield Dutch Reformed Church had far-reaching religious significance by contributing to the growth of other Reformed churches. Originating education and government in Fairfield and giving its community historical and social continuity for two hundred and fifty-five years, the church has come to symbolize the town itself. And it is fitting that many of the church's founders who found religious freedom in America fought for its independence in the Revolutionary War.

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Deed from Aaron Kiersted to the Elders and Deacons of the First Reformed Church of Fairfield, November 7, 1801, Essex County Hall of Records, book L, pages 18-19.

Fairfield Church Account Book, 1804-1833.

The Thomas Ball Map of 1766, New York Historical Society.

The Milledge Map of 1774.

SECONDARY SOURCES

Commerative Booklets on the Anniversary of the Fairfield Reformed Church, 1931, 1933, 1940, 1945, 1954, 1970.

Ecclesiastical History, Chapter one, The Holland Society of New York, New York City.

"Fairfield (Gansegat) Dutch Church Account Book 1804-1833", Geneological Magazine of New Jersey.

Labaw, Rev. George, History of the Preakness Reformed Church, 1901.

Leiby, Adrian C., New Jersey Historical Series, Volume 10, Van Nostrand, 1964.

New Jersey: A Guide to its Present and Past, (WPA Project), Hastings House, 1939.

The Newark News Sunday Magazine, Section five, October 11, 1970.

VERBAL SOURCES

Adelia M. Collard, Horseneck Road, Fairfield, New Jersey 07006.

C. Wellington Dey, 40 Mountain Avenue, Pompton Plains, New Jersey.