

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

For NPS use only

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

received APR 22 1988
date entered MAY 19 1988

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

1. Name

historic Mount Salem Methodist Episcopal Church

and or common

2. Location

street & number County Route 579 NA not for publication

city, town Alexandria Township vicinity of

state New Jersey code 034 county Hunterdon code 019

3. Classification

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

4. Owner of Property

name Township of Alexandria

street & number c/o Thelma Wilson, Township Clerk, RD #2, Box 164

city, town Pittstown vicinity of state New Jersey 08867

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Hunterdon County Hall of Records, Clerk's Office

street & number Main Street

city, town Flemington state New Jersey 08822

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

Hunterdon County Master Plan:
title Sites of Historic Interest has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date November 1979 federal state county local

depository for survey records Hunterdon County Cultural & Heritage Commission, Administration Bldg.,

city, town Flemington state New Jersey 08822

7. Description

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

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Mount Salem Methodist Episcopal Church is a frame mid-19th century country church whose simple detailing reveals both Greek Revival and Italianate influences. Set back approximately 75 feet from the road, it stands at the south end of a small cast-iron-fenced graveyard which is planted with large cedar trees and is surrounded by woods and fields. Built in 1864, the 1-story gable-roofed clapboard-clad structure has a 3-bay gable-end principal facade, 3-bay side walls, and a shallow gabled chancel on the rear elevation. Barely visible on the front of the church, the coursed rubble stone foundation is several feet above grade on the rear and retains much of its early V-joint pointing (a marble datestone set in the southeast corner of the foundation has been stolen). The roof is covered with modern asphalt shingles.

The front of the church exhibits an amalgam of Greek Revival and Italianate design elements. The Greek Revival temple form is suggested by a gable pediment which is visually supported by corner pilasters. A large box cornice with wide frieze, trimmed with crown and bed moldings, forms the pediment whose clapboarded tympanum is pierced by an oculus which has plain trim with shoulder blocks. The oculus is temporarily covered; its round window sash with radiating muntins has been removed for repair. Slight projections in the pediment's horizontal cornice at both ends form capitals for the wide plain corner pilasters which have a "bracket" on the inner edge at the bottom to suggest a base. At mid-point the horizontal cornice is broken by a segmental arch which serves as a hood for the central window whose segmentally arched head cuts into the bottom edge of the frieze. The treatment of this window and the two flanking windows is Italianate. The central window has double hung sashes whose muntins create a mullioned pattern with small-paned border and double-arched head. It is capped by a segmentally arched hoodmold which terminates on both sides in small corbel-bracketed blocks. The larger, 9/9 sash, flanking windows have similar, but simpler round-cornered hoodmolds. The front entry, centered below the middle window, was badly damaged in an arson attempt several years ago. The opening has been boarded over and fitted with a modern door as a temporary measure until restoration can be undertaken. It has round-cornered architrave trim, some of which survives, as does one half of the double-leaf paneled door.

The side and rear elevations of the building are more simply detailed. The cornice and frieze are continued on both side walls and on the rear gable where, instead of a pediment, they are carried on the raking eaves and terminate in returns. The chancel has boxed overhanging eaves with crown molding, bed molding, and frieze. Pilasters matching those on the front are found only at the front end of both side walls; narrow corner boards were used at the back corners and on the chancel. There are three 12/12 sash windows with plain trim on each side wall; the vertical, middle muntin of each sash is larger than the other muntins creating a mullioned effect. The rear elevation is windowless except for a narrow 3/3 sash window on each side of the chancel. All of the building's windows retain shutter pintles; the shutters have been removed but survive.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 7 Page 2 Mount Salem Methodist Episcopal Church, Alexandria
Township, Hunterdon County, New Jersey

Like the exterior, the interior of the church has undergone few alterations since the 19th century. It contains one large room with the sanctuary at the west end and a balcony at the east end (the area below which was partitioned off as a vestibule some years ago). Original finishes include random-width flooring, plaster walls and ceiling, architrave door and window trim, recessed-panel doors, simply molded baseboards, and a wainscoting of quirk-beaded vertical boards on the west wall. Divided by two aisles, the pews also are original; of simple board construction, they are ornamented with S-curved arm rests and with chamfered edges and plain band moldings on the ends.

The sanctuary consists of a two-tiered platform enclosed by an alter rail and backed by an elaborately detailed arch which frames the opening to the shallow chancel. The lower tier has a single step for communicants kneeling at the alter rail whose large molded railing is supported by an arcade of vase-shaped balusters. The upper tier has a paneled base and curved steps on the south end. There probably were similar steps at the north end which, along with the northern leg of the U-shaped alter rail, presumably were removed in the later construction of choir platform occupying the northwest corner of the church. The choir platform also has a paneled base; its railing is curtained. The archway which frames the chancel is the church's most notable interior feature. Italianate in style, it has square compound posts with two-tiered pedestals which support a scroll-bracketed round arch crowned by an eared segmental-arched cornice with large console brackets at both ends, curvilinear cresting in the middle and above the ears, and finial-capped blocks behind the cresting at both ends. The round-arched motif is repeated in the molded plaster panel ornamenting the wall of the chancel. The wainscoting of the chancel wall (narrow quirk-beaded vertical boards) and that above the original wainscoting to the north of the chancel is a subsequent installation. The only remaining piece of altar furniture is an Eastlake-style lectern.

Access to the balcony is by an enclosed staircase rising along the south end of the front wall. There is a closet below the staircase; a closed railing of vertical quirk-beaded boards protects the stair opening in the balcony. A matching staircase at the north end of the front was removed some years ago. Its doors and woodwork were recycled for the fiberboard partition installed under the front edge of the balcony which created a large entry vestibule. The balcony has a paneled railing with a "corbel table" below the molded top rail. The balcony also was enclosed at one time, probably to accommodate a Sunday school room for which the pews were removed and a floor was built above the steps on which they stood. The pews, however, survive, as do those removed from their original positions in the enclosed area below.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 7 Page 3

Mount Salem Methodist Episcopal Church, Alexandria
Township, Hunterdon County, New Jersey

The church also retains evidence of its early heating and lighting systems. The square chimneys built into the southwest and northwest corners vented wood and later coal stoves which provided the building with its sole source of heat; their stacks have been removed above the roofline. Two long iron hooks for hanging oil lamps remain screwed in the ceiling at the rear; a cast-iron lamp bracket is mounted on the frame of the north wall's west window. The church presently has electrical service but remains without plumbing.

The church has a small dooryard which is enclosed by a cast-iron picket fence with elaborate finial-capped Gothic-arched open posts and arrowhead-capped pickets. A cast iron plaque has been discovered attached to the fence identifying the manufacturer as the Champion Iron Fence Company of Kenton, Ohio. The fence extends around the front and side of the small graveyard to the north of the church. Although not common, cast iron fencing is found throughout northwestern New Jersey; the Sandy Ridge Baptist Church is nearby Delaware Township (1007-69) has, for example, an elaborate cast iron gateway at the entrance to its cemetery.

The Mount Salem Church cemetery is planted with several large cedar trees and has about fifty 19th and 20th century gravestones of typical design. The earliest marker is dated 1846; the last burial was about twenty-five years ago. There are at least two gravestones beneath the floor at the front of the church; they evidently were located in front of the original Mount Salem Church and were covered in the construction of the present building.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 2Mount Salem Methodist Episcopal Church, Alexandria
Township, Hunterdon County, New Jersey

Mount Salem Church is also of local historical interest. In 1838 local Methodists first organized into a society which met for worship in private dwellings. Local landowner David Dilts offered to donate a lot for a church and cemetery and circulated a subscription to raise funds for the construction of a church. A plain building, measuring 23 by 33 feet, was completed, free of debt, and dedicated in 1846. It was named Mount Salem by Rev. Manning Force, who had encouraged the small congregation to build. For a number of years the congregation was associated with the Clinton Circuit, but in 1858 under the direction of the Newark Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church it was connected with the Union, Norton, and Pattenburg churches. The congregation increased in numbers and by 1864 had outgrown its original building. In that year a newly elected Board of Trustees formed a building committee and raised the necessary funds. Eli Bosenbury of Clinton was awarded the construction contract. The present church, 36 by 52 feet with ceiling 20 feet in height, was completed by the end of 1864 at a cost of \$3,600 and dedicated in February, 1865.² Other than the cited reference in the 1881 county history, no other information has come to light in regard to Eli Bosenbury.

Throughout the rest of the 19th century and well into the third quarter of this century, the church continued to serve its small congregation under the guidance of a succession of ministers. Services were last held in the church in 1962 and shortly thereafter the building was sold to its present owner, the Township of Alexandria. The church was not reoccupied until several years ago when it was placed in the care of the Alexandria Township Historical Society which is slowly but carefully undertaking its restoration.³

Notes:

1. These observations on the region's early church architecture are based on the findings of a number of area historic sites surveys including: Hunterdon County Master Plan, Sites of Historic Interest, Flemington, New Jersey: Hunterdon County Planning Board, 1979 and Delaware Township Historic Sites Survey, Delaware Township Environmental Commission 1984. See Dennis N. Bertland Early Architecture of Warren County, Harmony, New Jersey: Harmony Press, 1976, p. 134 for an example of a transitional type.
2. James P. Snell, (ed.) History of Hunterdon and Somerset Counties, New Jersey Philadelphia: Everts & Peck, 1881, pp. 422-23.
3. "Mount Salem Church", Alexandria Township Historical Society, no date.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 9 Page 2

Mount Salem Methodist Episcopal Church, Alexandria
Township, Hunterdon County, New Jersey

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Books, Pamphlets, and Reports:

Barber, John W. and Henry Howe. Historical Collections of the State of New Jersey. Newark, NJ: Benjamin Olds, 1844.

Bertland, Dennis N. Early Architecture of Warren County. Harmony, New Jersey: Harmony Press, 1976.

Delaware Township Historic Sites Survey. Delaware Township Environmental Commission, 1984.

Hunterdon County Master Plan, Sites of Historic Interest. Flemington, NJ: Hunterdon County Planning Board, November 1979.

"Mount Salem Church." Alexandria Township Historical Society: no date.

Snell, James P. (ed) History of Hunterdon and Somerset Counties, New Jersey. Philadelphia: Everts and Peck, 1881.

Maps and Atlases:

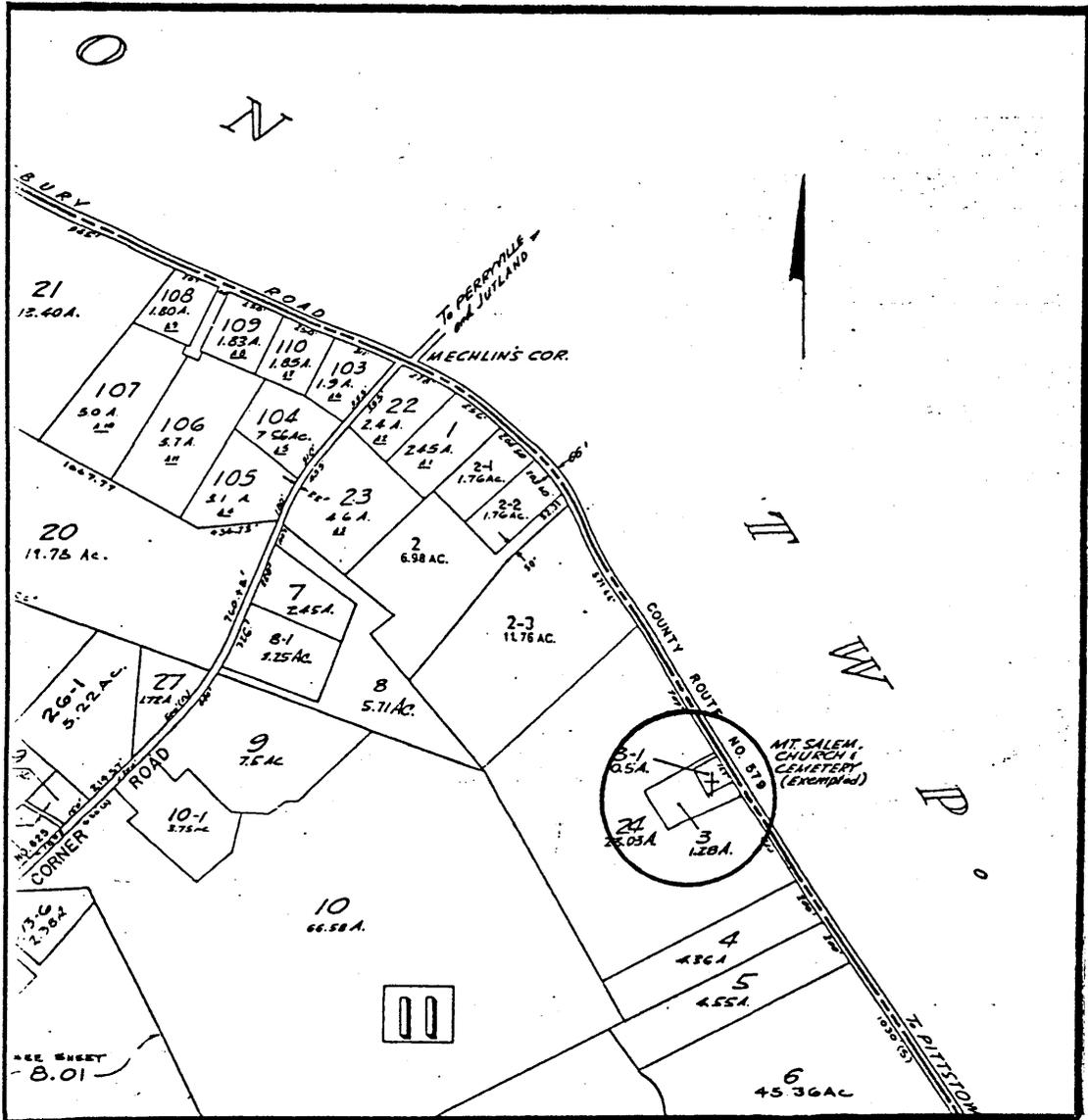
Beers, F. W. County Atlas of Hunterdon, New Jersey. New York: F. W. Beers & Co., 1873.

Beers, S. N. and D. J. Lake. Map of the Vicinity of Philadelphia and Trenton. Philadelphia: C.K. Stone and A. Pomeroy, 1860.

Cornell, Samuel C. Map of Hunterdon County, New Jersey. Philadelphia: S. C. Cornell and Lloyd Vanderveer, 1851.

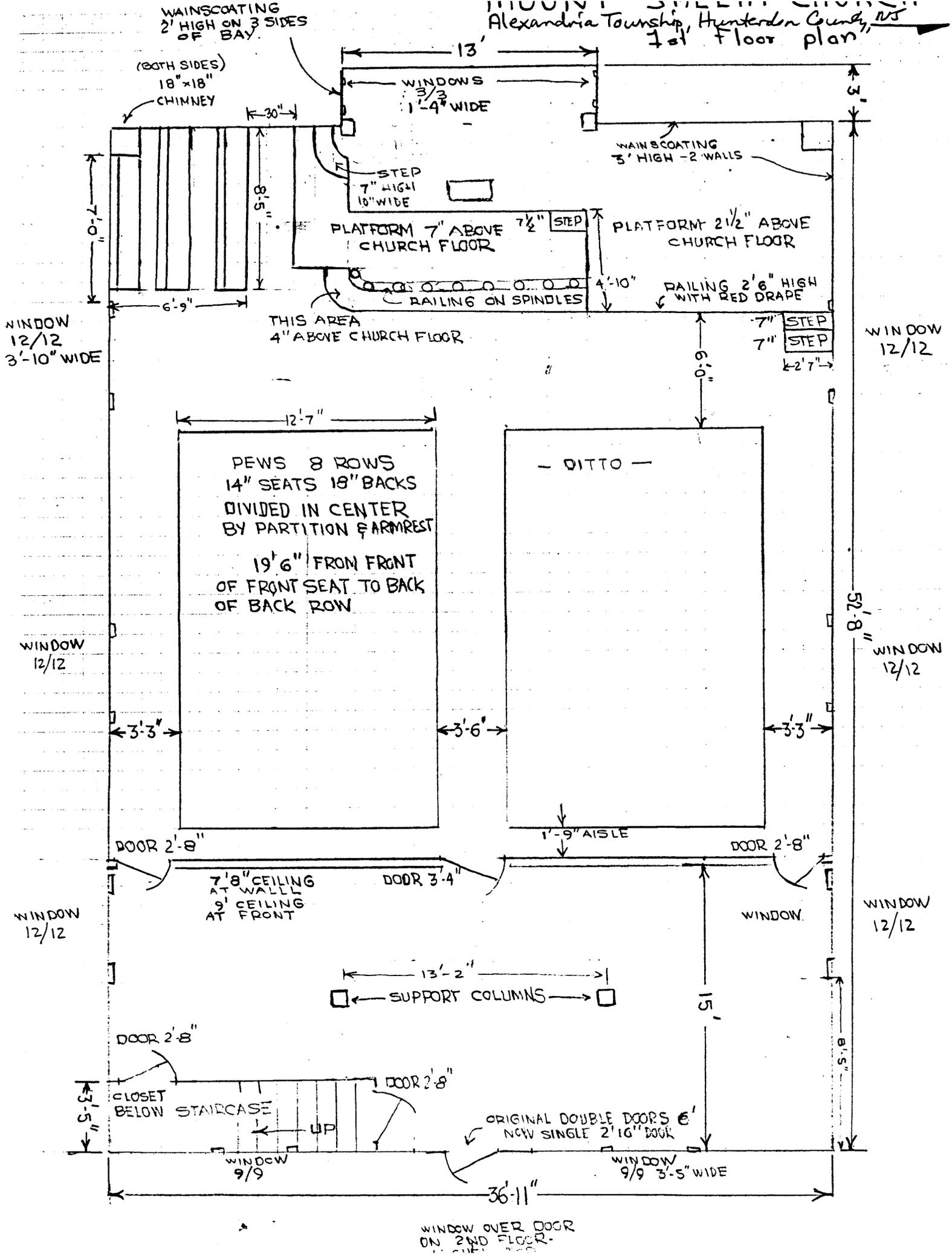
Hughes, Michael. Farm Map of Alexandria Township Hunterdon County, NJ. Michael Hughes, 1860.

Mount Salem Methodist Episcopal Church
Alexandria Township
Hunterdon County, New Jersey



Mount Salem Church: boundaries of nominated property
Alexandria Township tax map, sheet 6

Alexandria Township, Hunterdon County, NJ
1st floor plan



WAINSCOTING
2' HIGH ON 3 SIDES
OF BAY.

(BOTH SIDES)
18" x 18"
CHIMNEY

WINDOWS
3/2
1'-4" WIDE

WAINSCOTING
3' HIGH - 2 WALLS

STEP
7" HIGH
10" WIDE

PLATFORM 7" ABOVE
CHURCH FLOOR

PLATFORM 2 1/2" ABOVE
CHURCH FLOOR

RAILING ON SPINDLES

RAILING 2' 6" HIGH
WITH RED DRAPE

WINDOW
12/12
3'-10" WIDE

THIS AREA
4" ABOVE CHURCH FLOOR

7" STEP
7" STEP
2' 7"

WINDOW
12/12

PEWS 8 ROWS
14" SEATS 18" BACKS
DIVIDED IN CENTER
BY PARTITION & ARMREST

19' 6" FROM FRONT
OF FRONT SEAT TO BACK
OF BACK ROW

- DITTO -

WINDOW
12/12

52' 8" WINDOW
12/12

WINDOW
12/12

WINDOW
12/12

DOOR 2'-8"

DOOR 2'-8"

7' 8" CEILING
AT WALL
9' CEILING
AT FRONT

DOOR 3'-4"

1'-9" AISLE

13'-2" SUPPORT COLUMNS

DOOR 2'-8"

DOOR 2'-8"

CLOSET
BELOW STAIRCASE

UP

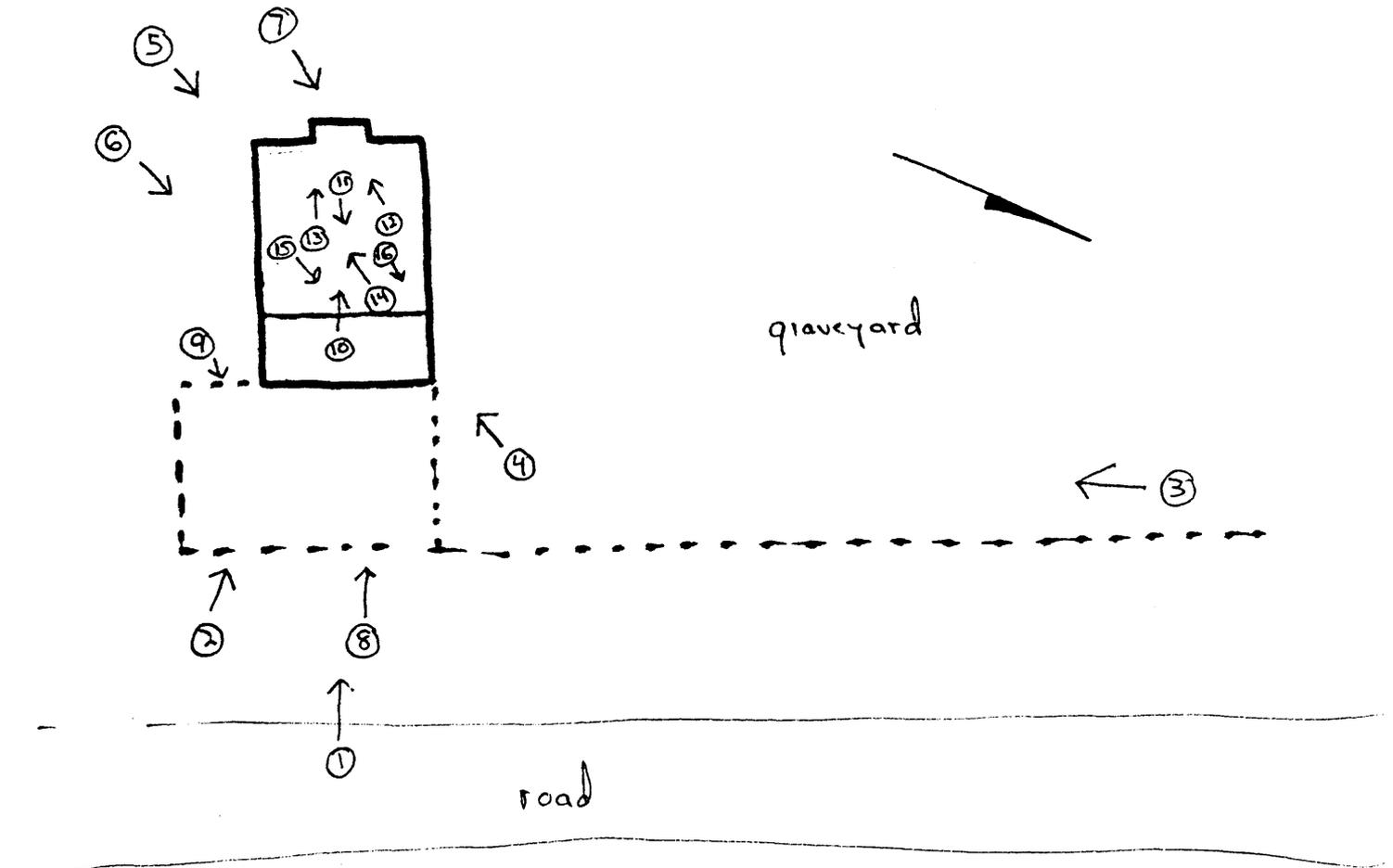
ORIGINAL DOUBLE DOORS 6'
NOW SINGLE 2' 10" DOOR

WINDOW
9/9

WINDOW
9/9 3'-5" WIDE

WINDOW OVER DOOR
ON 2ND FLOOR.

Photo Location map



Mount Salem Methodist Church
Alexandria Township
Hunterdon County, New Jersey

Not to scale.