

**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street & number County Route 579 NA not for publication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**

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

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>
<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.

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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.

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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.

# 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 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 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**      1864                                      **Builder/Architect**    Eli Bosenbury (builder)

**Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)**

Mount Salem Methodist Episcopal Church possesses local architectural significance. Erected in 1864, it is a late and well-preserved example of a type of church that was ubiquitous through-out the region during the first half of the 19th century. It is also one of the few examples of its type in the area to exhibit a combination of Greek Revival and Italianate design influences. Spared the inappropriate alterations to which Alexandria Township's several other surviving 19th-century churches have been subjected, especially on the interior, Mount Salem Church retains its essential integrity of design and materials, and is an important document of the rural region's mid-19th century church architecture.

The church type which Mount Salem exemplifies appeared in the region in the late 18th century and remained popular until the middle of the 19th century. This type is characterized by a symmetrical rectangular form, gable-end principal facade with one or two entries and a regular fenestration. While a belfry occasionally was added at the front end, the steepleless version (of which Mount Salem is an example) is more common. The roots of the type undoubtedly lie in the classically inspired designs of English architects Christopher Wren and James Gibbs which were influencing the church architecture of English America before the middle of the 18th century. From the evidence of the very few surviving examples and documentary sources, the region's earliest churches were of a meeting house type, essentially domestic in scale and detailing, with the entry not in the gable end, but in one of the long walls. A transitional phase between the two types is suggested by at least one 18th century area church with both gable-end and sidewall entries, but by the early 1800s the gable-fronted type had become ubiquitous throughout the region. In the 1860s, however, the type disappeared from the local building vocabulary, supplanted by churches of a variety of revival-style designs.

While some examples of the gable-fronted church type are quite unadorned, most are embellished, with varying degrees of sophistication, with detailing derived from several popular architectural styles of the first half of the 19th century. First Federal and then Greek Revival influences predominated throughout the period; the use of Gothic Revival and Italianate design elements was uncommon but not unknown around mid-century, and they usually were employed in conjunction with classically derived detailing. Mount Salem Church is a rare area example of its type exhibiting a combination of Greek Revival and Italianate influences, as is evident from the design of its principal elevation. The rather plainly detailed interior is relieved by a decorative feature of particular note, the elaborate Italianate archway framing the chancel.

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet.

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property 1.78

Quadrangle name Pittstown, NJ

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

### UTM References

A 

1	8	5	0	1	4	0	0	4	4	9	4	7	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** The boundaries are Route 579 on the east, and on the north, west, and south sides, the bounds of Block 11, Lot 3 (the historic church property) and Block 11, Lot 3.1 (the church cemetery).

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 Dennis N. Bertland (prepared for the Alexandria Township Historical Society)

organization Dennis Bertland Associates date August 1987

street & number P.O. Box 11 telephone (201) 689-6356

city or town Port Murray state New Jersey 07865

# 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 *Steven J. Seuchie*

title Asst. Commissioner for Natural & Historic Resources date 3/23/88

### For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register Entered in the National Register *Steven Byer* date 5-19-88  
Keeper of the National Register

Attest: \_\_\_\_\_ date \_\_\_\_\_

Chief of Registration

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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.<sup>2</sup> 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.<sup>3</sup>

## 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.

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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.

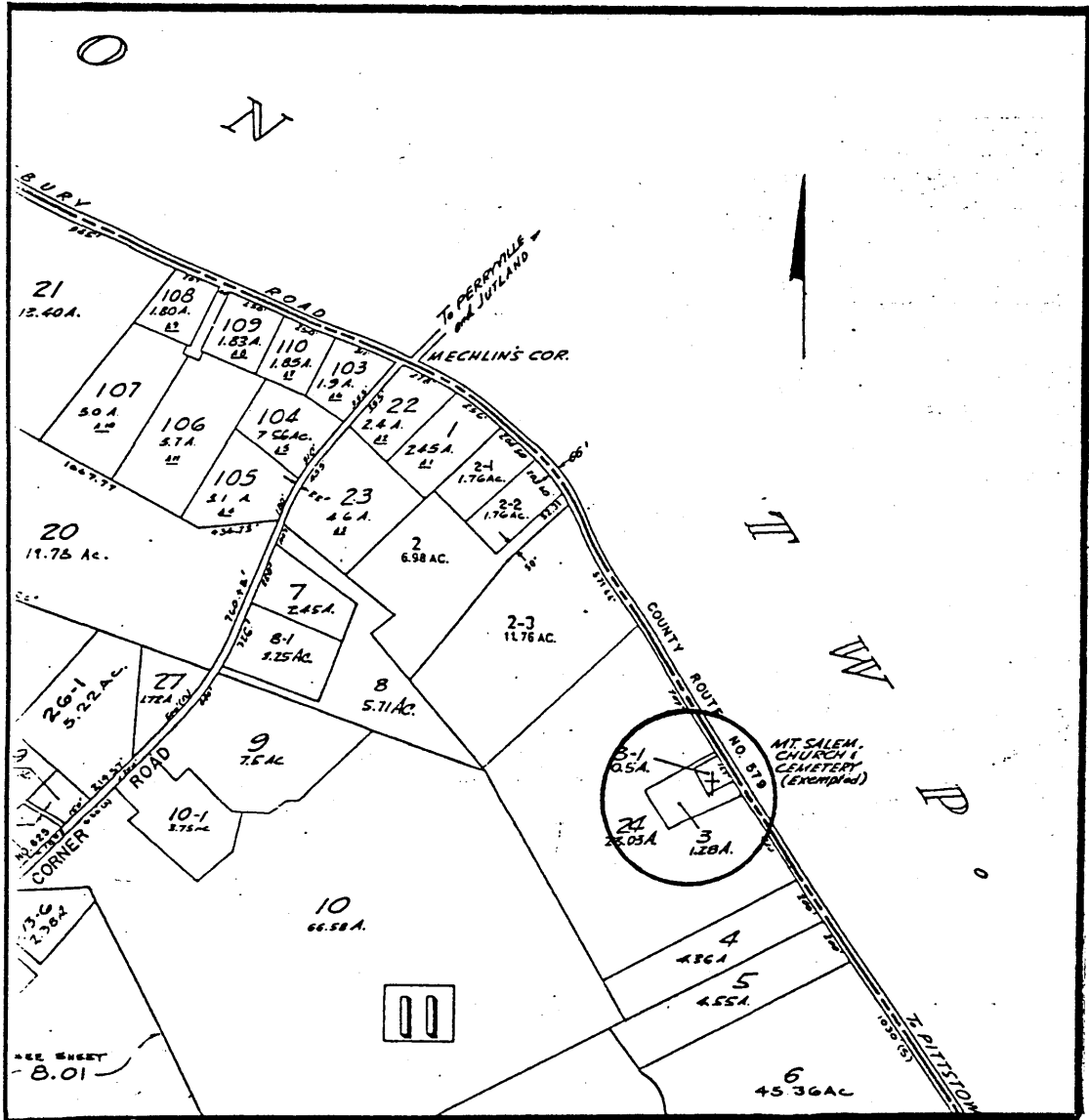
Beers, S. N. and D. J. Lake. Map of the Vicinity of Philadelphia and Trenton. Philadelphia: C.K. Stone and A. Pomeroy, 1860.

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



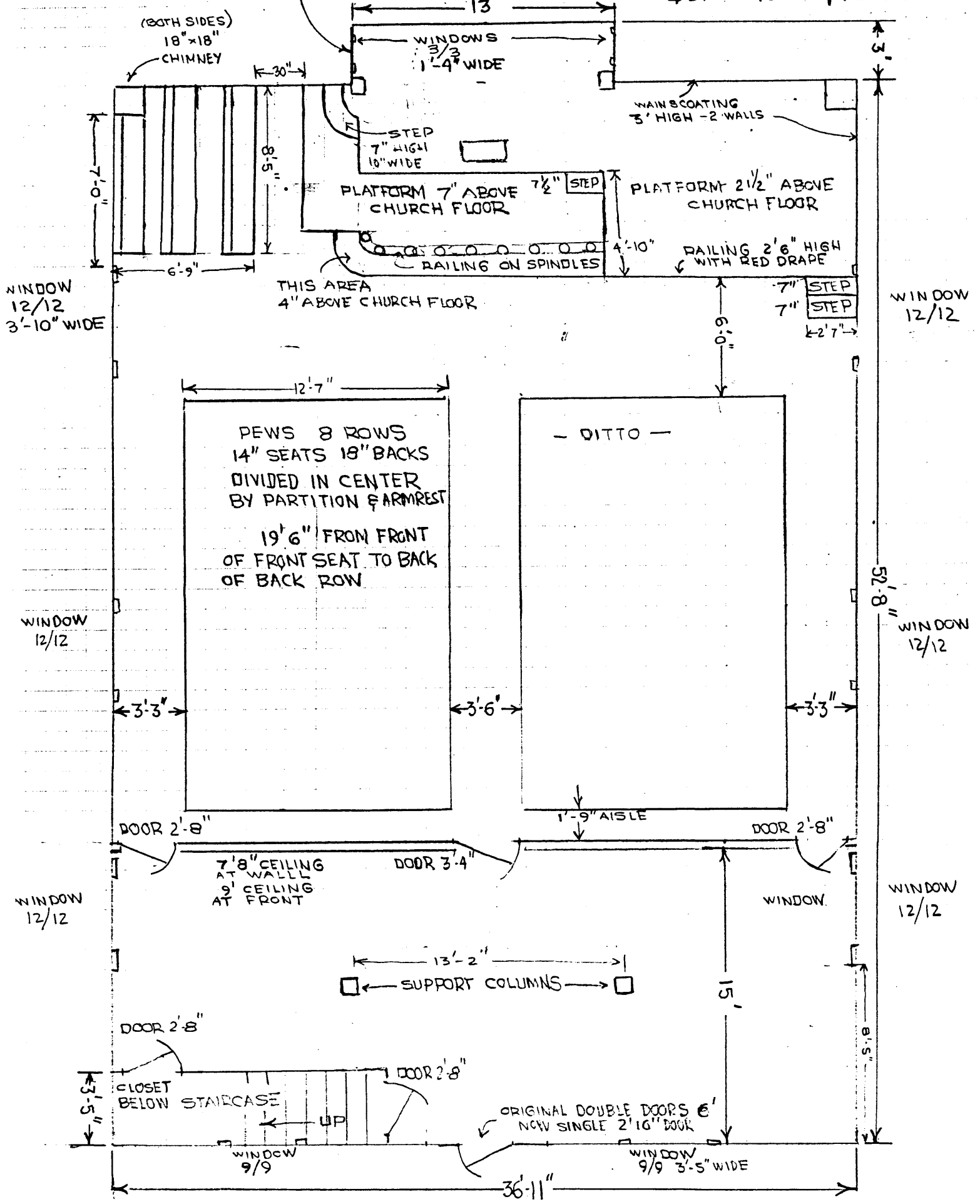
Mount Salem Methodist Episcopal Church  
Alexandria Township  
Hunterdon County, New Jersey



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

WAINSCOTING  
2' HIGH ON 3 SIDES  
OF BAY.

Alexandria Township, Hunterdon County, NJ  
1st floor plan



(BOTH SIDES)  
18" x 18"  
CHIMNEY

13'  
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

12'-7"  
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

DOOR 2'-8"

DOOR 2'-8"

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

DOOR 3'-4"

1'-9" AISLE

WINDOW  
12/12

WINDOW

WINDOW  
12/12

13'-2"  
SUPPORT COLUMNS

15'

DOOR 2'-8"

DOOR 2'-8"

CLOSET  
BELOW STAIRCASE

UP

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

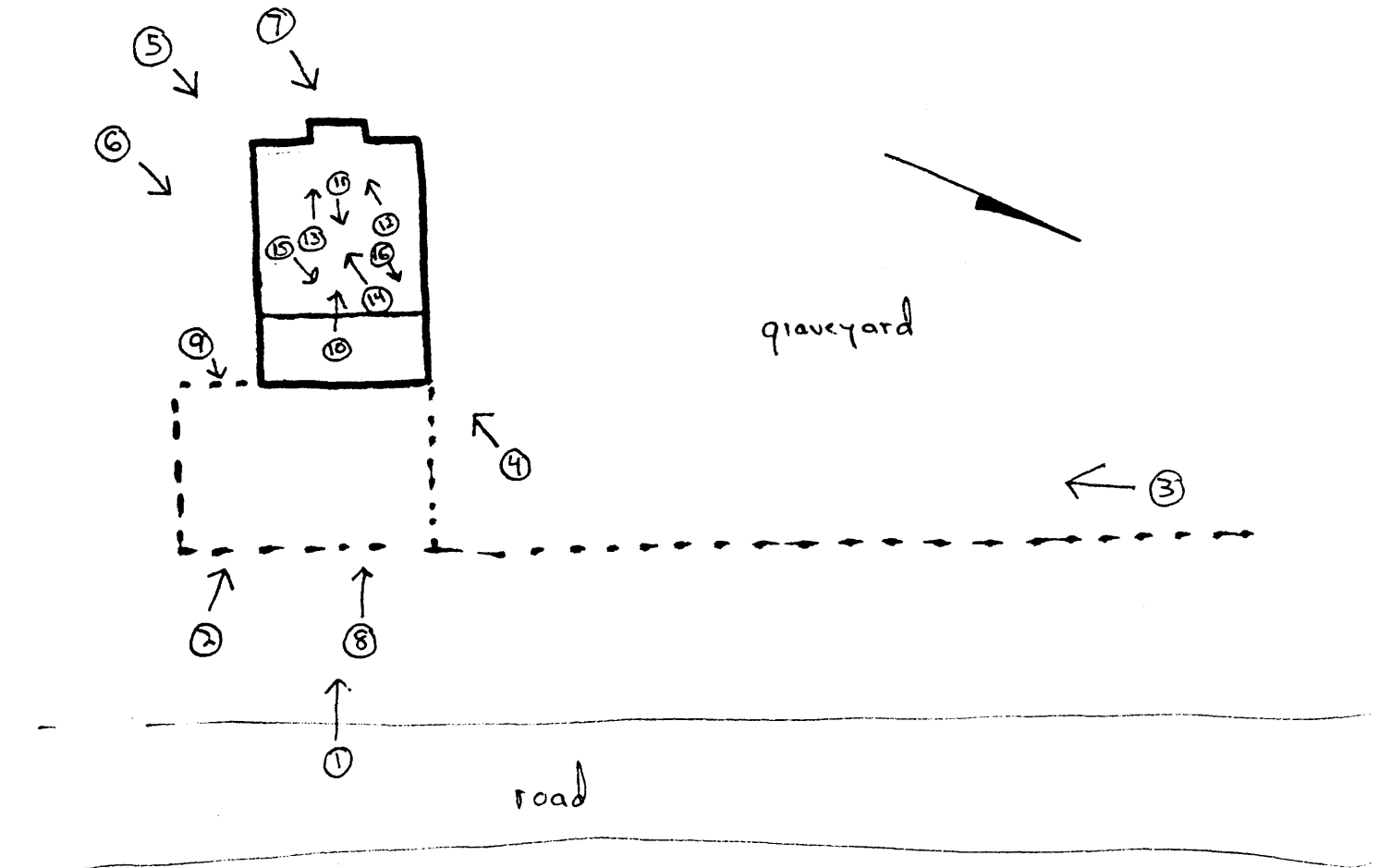
WINDOW  
9/9

WINDOW  
9/9 3'-5" WIDE

36'-11"

WINDOW OVER DOOR  
ON 2ND FLOOR.

# Photo Location map



Mount Salem Methodist Church  
Alexandria Township  
Hunterdon County, New Jersey

Not to scale.