

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

received **AUG** 6 1985

date entered **SEP** 5 1985

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

**1. Name**

historic The Dutch Reformed Church at Romopock, The Island Church

and/or common The Ramapo Reformed Church

**2. Location**

street & number Island Road at West Ramapo Avenue

NA not for publication

city, town Mahwah

vicinity of

state New Jersey

code 034

county Bergen

code 003

**3. Classification**

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> educational	<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

**4. Owner of Property**

name Ramapo Reformed Church

street & number Island Road & West Ramapo Avenue

city, town Mahwah

vicinity of

state New Jersey

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Bergen County Administrative Building

street & number Main Street

city, town Hackensack

state New Jersey

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

New Jersey Historic Sites Inventory:

title Bergen County

has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date 1982-84

federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records Office of New Jersey Heritage

city, town CN 402, Trenton

state New Jersey 08625

## 7. Description

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>
<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 Ramapo Reformed Church, or Island Church, is located just below the confluence of the Ramapo River (then Pompton River), the Mahwah River (then Haverstraw River) and the Masonicus Brook (the Rocky Brook). It stands on a rise of ground at an elevation of 330', known in the early days as "the Island" as it was surrounded by streams and marshland. The lofty Ramapo Mountains rise sharply to the west and the Masonicus hills, with its Cragmere Park of the 20th century, lie to the east.

The church building is basically a modest gable-roofed structure of 2080 sq. ft. with a slightly projecting central two-stage tower with a short spire. The main block is relatively unchanged and when viewed from the southeast must look much as it did almost 200 years ago, with the exception of the art glass windows. This 1798 structure is set on flattish broken stones for a foundation and measures just under 43' front by 51' deep. The 3-bay facade has centrally located double Victorian doors having decorative strap hinges set into a Gothic-arched doorway in the tower base over which are the metal numerals "1795". Farther up near the junction of the roof ridge is a wheel window, and above that an arched-top 4-paned window, repeated at the rear of the tower. A cornice tops the first stage decorated with bracket-type modillion blocks. These also appear under the roof eaves of the main section. A louvered octagonal belfry is capped with an octagonal concave metal roof with a metal ball at its apex surmounted by a black metal weathervane.

The original wood shingled roof was replaced by slate in August of 1904, which lasted until 1940, and that has now been replaced by asphalt shingles. The original siding of beaded clapboards is still in place but was covered with wood shingles in the 1920's. In 1871, the original flat-headed windows were replaced with those having blunt Gothic arches and heavy center mullions. They had border panes of black and white frosted glass in them until replaced by stained glass, and more recently 2 large and 2 small windows were done in the Tiffany art glass style. (The southwest window is identified as by George Hardy Payne Studios in Paterson, N.J.)

Formerly there were just 2 windows in each long side but recently an emergency door has been added on the east and an access door on the west toward the sanctuary end of the church. A small 3-sided apse had been added in 1871, which was a common addition locally to these churches. This was superseded in the mid 20th century by a rectangular extension in 1955 by Odell to house the new organ machinery.

The interior of the church is simply finished and decorated, and retains much of its original material. The height of the ceiling is impressive and is painted a light blue. This is the original barrel vault with hewn arch supports concealed above. The old straight-back servant pews remain in the U-shaped gallery. On the main floor the walls are lined with rare original waist high, horizontal, hand planed and beaded paneling. The 8' 7" X 7" posts run from floor to roof and are chamfered with lamb's tongue ends. The present pulpit is a gift of Dr. Edward Russell Suffern in memory of the early benefactor and famous local

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

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

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Ramapo Reformed Church, Mahwah Township,

Continuation sheet Bergen County, NJ

Item number 7

Page 1

man of distinction, Judge John Suffern (1741-1830) who is buried in the cemetery. An early pewter communion set is on display.

The renovation of 1871 resulted in a few changes. The steeple was redone, the "old fashioned pulpit" was removed as well as the "square pews with doors". The galleries were lowered and "neatly paneled". Mr. Henion was the carpenter. The woodwork was finished in a delicate green and white by Mr. Carlough and some graining was done. A new red carpet was laid and cushions stuffed with hair made for the pews. Two large brass chandeliers were hung. New pulpit furniture consisted of 4 leather chairs and a sofa, 2 marble-topped tables and a new Bible. The cellar was excavated at this time and is still dirt floored. The heavy 9" x 12" and 10" x 11" hewn floor beams are still in good shape. They average 38" U.C. The old wide floor boards are still in place but are covered above by carpeting. The northerly extensions have crawl space beneath.

The arcaded wing attached to the northwest corner was built in 1962 as an antechamber and also houses the ministerial offices. It is frame clad with vinyl siding. The plans for this addition were drawn in 1961 by D. Whitney Goubert of New York City.

## 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 type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

**Specific dates** 1798 **Builder/Architect** probably David Baldwin

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Ramapo Reformed Church, or Island Church, is one of the ten remaining Federal Period churches of Bergen County, only two of which are frame. It is the smallest of the Reformed Churches and is the oldest frame church building in the county.

The church is unique in that it is the product of two faiths working together - the Lutheran and the Dutch Reformed congregations. It is located at the formerly important crossroads of the Revolution where the supply store belonging to Robert Erskine was located.

### HISTORY

The history relating to this church goes back to April 8, 1713 when a small group of German Lutheran Palatines arrived in this area and settled upon the Romopock Tract (established in 1709). Lutheran pastor Justus Falkner of New York visited them for the first time on August 18, 1713. Although also serving Hackensack and Pluckemin in New Jersey, he felt there was enough interest here and organized the Ramapo congregation on June 14, 1715. There were a few Dutch settlers in the area as well who either met in local homes or traveled to the Dutch Reformed mother church in Hackensack or that at the Ponds (now Oakland) which had been organized in 1710. It is said that about 1720 a log church was built (probably about 20' square) near the knoll or glacial Kame, about 1000' south of the present church. This rise of ground water used jointly as a burying ground for both faiths and exists today, bordered on the north by Moffat Road, but is in poor condition. The earliest burial dates that were readable at one time went back to 1745. The Lutheran records in the "Kirch Buch Vor Die Rembachische Evangelische Gemeinde" run from December 18, 1749 to October 3, 1817.

By 1739 when Charles Clinton came through making a survey of the Cheesecoaks Patent he observed a frame church that had been built on Wanmaker property (about 3800' south of the present church). He described it as "a little Meeting House belonging to the High Germans". This may mean that the two factions had their own meeting houses for a while but that the log church had disappeared prior to the Revolution since it is not shown on the Erskine maps. It reportedly had been served by the Dominie from the Reformed Church at the Ponds (on the Franklin Lakes/Oakland border now) and the church at Paramus built in 1735.

The Lutheran congregation was revitalized by a visit from the famous Henry Melchior Muhlenberg on August 15, 1759 who stayed at the home of Peter Wanmaker, Elder, for several days. He had the ability to speak to congregations in German,

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

Account books in the church archives.

250th Anniversary of the Christ Ev. Lutheran Church by T.L. & E.H. Grottke 1965

The History of the Classis of Paramus 1902

The History of Rockland County by F.B. Greene 1886

## 10. Geographical Data

Acree of nominated property 4.97

Quadrangle name Ramsey

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

### UTM References

A 

1	8	5	7	1	1	0	0	4	5	4	9	4	8	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 68, Lot 64 495' front, 458' rear  
448.32' west line  
510' east line

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

state code county code NA

state code county code

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Claire K. Tholl, architectural historian

organization Bergen County Historic Sites Advisory Board date Sept. 30, 1984

street & number (home) 50 Rolling Ridge Rd. telephone (201) 327-2144

city or town Upper Saddle River 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.

Deputy  
State Historic Preservation Officer signature

title Acting Director, Division of Parks & Forestry

date 7/22/85

For NPS use only

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

Entered in the  
National Register

date 9-5-85

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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

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

For NPS use only  
received  
date entered

Ramapo Reformed Church, Mahwah Township,  
Bergen County, NJ

Continuation sheet

Item number 8

Page 1

Dutch and English and had settled several disputes between Dutch and German groups. Both congregations had to depend on traveling ministers or holding simple services on their own and so shared the church on alternate Sundays.

In 1793 Robert Erskine of the Ringwood Ironworks purchased the adjacent land and buildings of Nathan Smith to serve as a store for the local people and nearby ironworks. It appears on the maps of the period as "Bellgrove", and was an active center.

In 1785 the Reformed congregation petitioned the Classis of Hackensack for "aid and liberty to be established into a church" which is granted provided that they continued to support the Ponds and Paramus churches as long as the Reverend Van der Linde remained to preach. That same year a plot of land at the southwest corner of Lot #156 of the Ramapo Tract (where the parsonage now stands) was "given to the Dutch Church or congregation at Ramapough". A warrant for 5000 acres in the Ramapo Tract had been give to three of the proprietors, John Stevens, James Parker, and Walter Rutherford on April 15, 1785. They in turn gave some of this property to the church but did not get the return until June 4, 1791, hence the delay in giving the deed. John Suffern, for whom Suffern, N.Y. is named, was instrumental in arranging this generous acquisition. The deed made September 13, 1791 to "the Ministers, Elders and Deacons of the Dutch Reformed Church at Romopock" was turned over for "the sum of Five Shillings proclamation money" and contained 46-44/100 acres of land. The church still has this original deed and about half the land.

In 1789 the Dutch Reformed people were able to have a minister come on a regular basis. He was the Reverend Peter Leydt who continued to serve the Ponds Church and one in Rockland County called the "Reformed Dutch Church in the upper part of Kakeath", which was west of New City, N.Y. In the meantime the old building had deteriorated leading Peter Wanmaker, Elder, to agree in 1790 to turn over the church to both congregations with the proviso that they make repairs. There also seems to have been thoughts of building a new structure at this time. The name "The Dutch Reformed Congregation at Ramapough" was formally adopted on January 18, 1791. The Reverend George Brinkerhoff took over in 1793 and led the congregation through the building phase. Aside from having the original deed, the church is extremely fortunate in having the original account book for the building of the edifice complete with names, dates, costs, and types of labor involved. It is entitled: "For the Two Combined Congregations of Ramapough - June 4th, 1798." Contributions were received in money and materials, including nails from Josiah Pierson's new nail factory on the Ramapo River. The carpenters gathered on June 4, 1798 and laid out the work for the laborers who began the

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

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

Ramapo Reformed Church, Mahwah Township,  
Bergen County, NJ

Continuation sheet

Item number 8

Page 2

For NPS use only

received

date entered

next day. Planks were hauled on June 9 and many more days passed cutting and fitting the bents on the ground. The masons did not begin until June 18 to lay up the foundation. On July 2 the first of the ruffage lath was delivered and the roof started going on on August 28. Six men were involved in "jointing shingles". Sand, lime and water were delivered on September 7 for the plaster work and finally on December 12 the door lock and two keys were provided. The two congregations must have had a joyful Christmas.

They continued to share the building on alternate Sundays and by 1810 Ramapough reported having 150 families enrolled. In 1824 a secession took place that "caused great strife and bitterness". Reverend James D. Demarest and parts of the consistory left on May 22 and held services "about a mile below Ramsey's". Ox chains were put on the door of the church to keep out the secessioners. Some of them are buried in the Union Cemetery rather than in Mahwah. It is said that by the end of the year and in 1825 the building "was in ruins" and the "congregation disbursed". The Reverend Jefferson Wyncoop, also of the church in Rockland, came that year and a recovery was made. It was not until the Reverend Peter Allen's term (1837-1853) that Ramapo finally had a resident minister, but his parsonage was sold in September 1844. On August 28, 1848 an agreement was made to terminate the shared use of the church in one year from that date. The Lutherans sold their interest for \$200 and subsequently built their own building in Tallman, N.Y. in 1855.

Hard times came upon the church again and there were only about 66 families connected with it when the Reverend George A. Magee was invited to preach as a guest on September 25, 1870. He spoke to "a few men and children" and commented later that: "The condition of the Building and Surroundings was a Wreck and looked as if totally abandoned." He was installed as pastor on July 10, 1871 and things took a turn for the better. A complete renovation took place as detailed in "Description". The Reverend Magee left in 1875 and the church had no pastor for four years. In 1879 the new parsonage was built across the street from the church and a new pastor secured.

In 1904, a slate roof was added. Money was raised for an organ in 1908. The carriage sheds were still standing to the northwest of the chapel then. On February 19, 1952 a fund drive was begun to enlarge the church. The first plan was to add to the front but fortunately in 1953 it was decided to add to the rear. This was accomplished by 1955 along with other changes. The arcaded el to the west was added and dedicated on November 15, 1962. The Education Building was enlarged and remodelled in 1968 and the parsonage done over in 1974. The Reverend Robert G. Bender, the present minister, has been here for 10 years.

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

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

For NPS use only  
received  
date entered

Ramapo Reformed Church, Mahwah Township,

Continuation sheet Bergen County, NJ

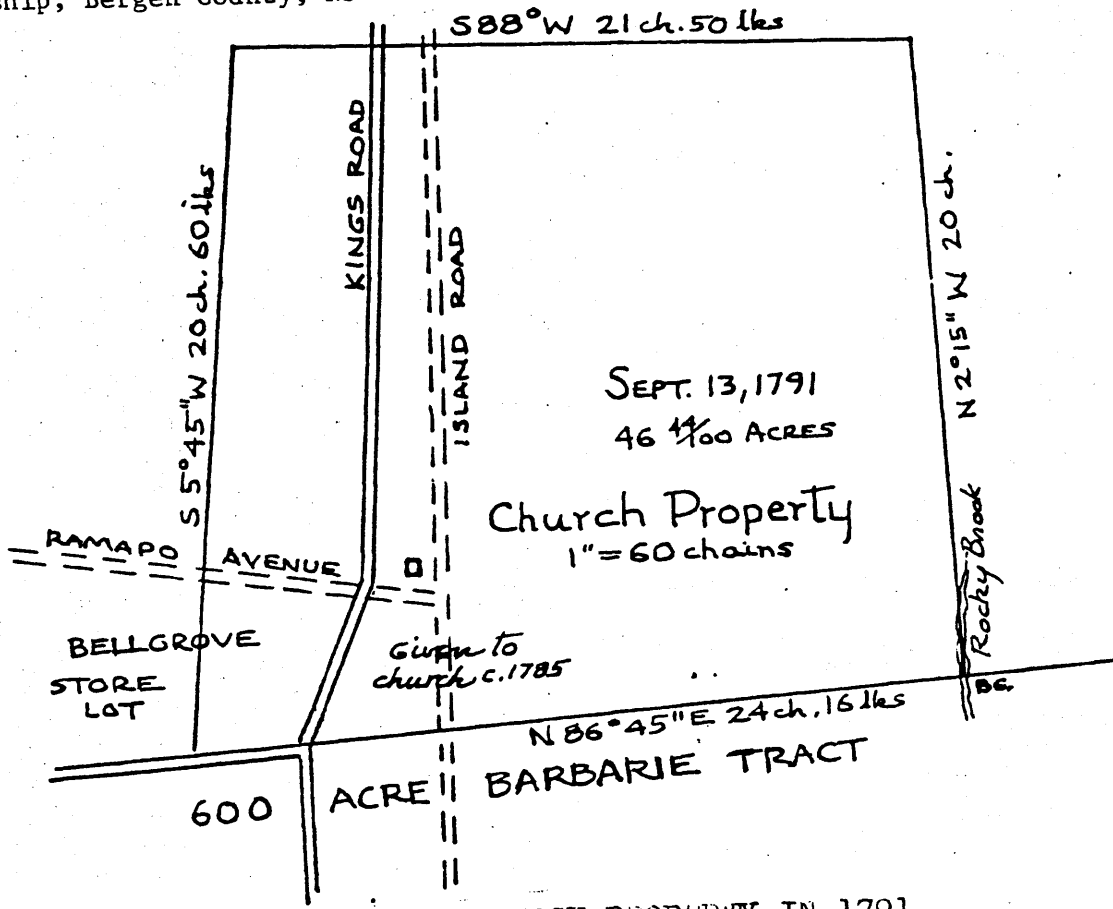
Item number 8

Page 3

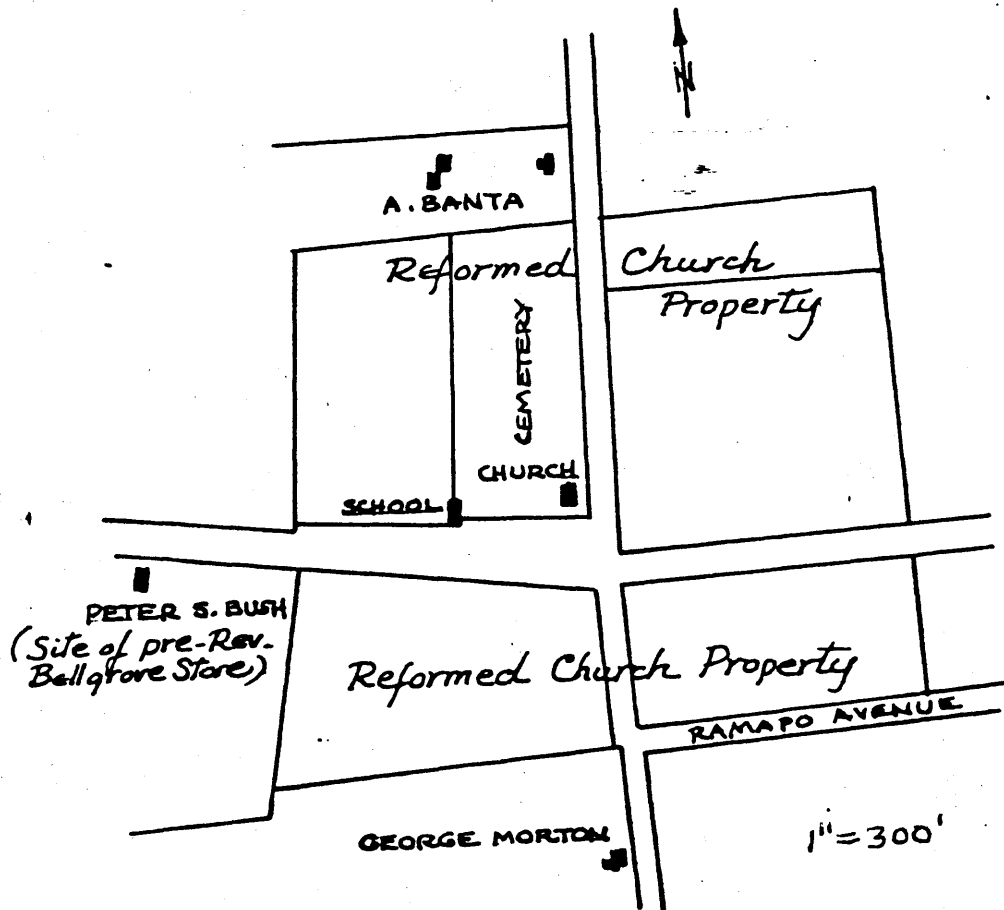
Many early settlers are buried in the adjoining cemetery including Rodman Price, the only governor of New Jersey to come from Bergen County. It is enclosed by an iron spike fence and contains many fine examples of the early stone cutters art. The old Revolutionary War road bed runs north from the Educational Building and divides the cemetery into a smaller section on the west side which was used in the early days for black burials.



Ramapo Reformed Church  
Mahwah Township, Bergen County, NJ

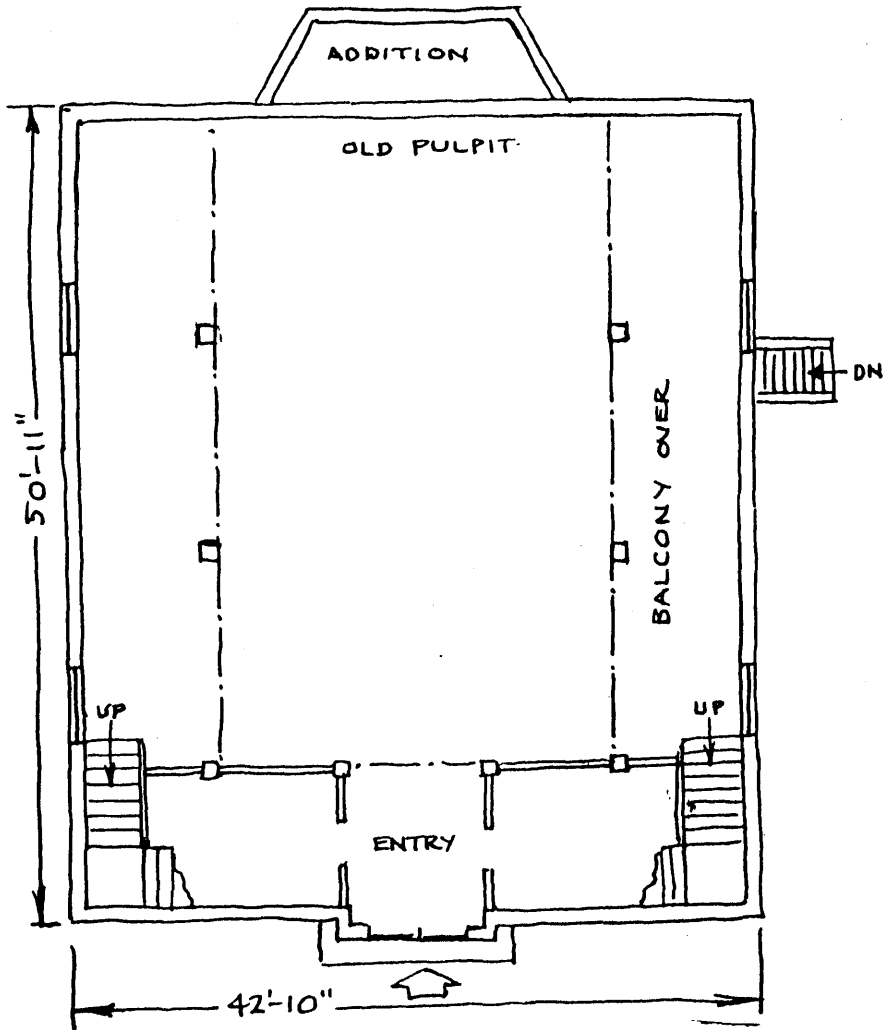


CHURCH PROPERTY IN 1791



CHURCH PROPERTY IN 1876

Ramapo Reformed Church  
Mahwah Township, Bergen County, NJ



CHURCH (c. 1900)

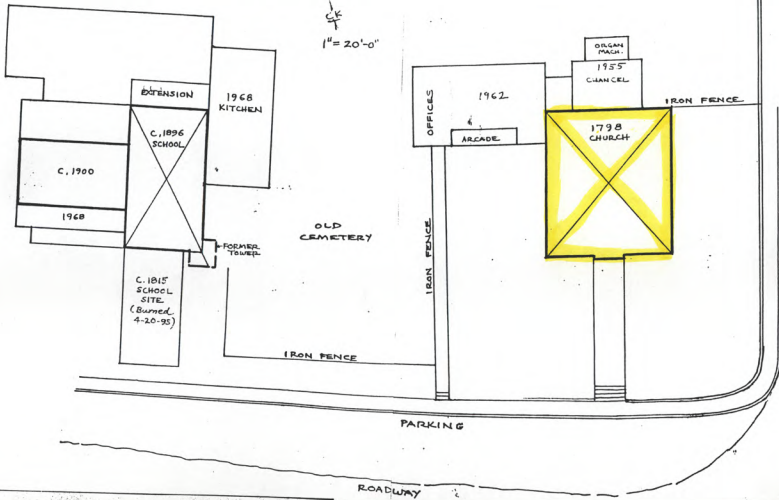
SKETCH PLANS

1" = 12'-0"  
CKT

BLACK (NEGRO)  
CEMETERY

STONE WALL  
1800-1850 (approx)  
*Pre-Revolutionary*

Ramapo Reformed Church  
Mahwah Township, Bergen County, NJ







Nomination Names: The Dutch Reformed Church at Rompock, The Island Church  
The Ramapo Reformed Church Complex

Island Road at West Ramapo Ave., Mahwah, N. J. (Bergen County)

Photo from the files of the Ramapo Reformed Church, 3/84  
No caption, no date. Northwest view, taken before wood shingles were applied  
to the clapboard.



Nomination Names:

The Dutch Reformed Church at Romopock, The Island Church  
The Ramapo Reformed Church Complex

Island Road at West Ramapo Ave., Mahwah, N. J. (Bergen County)

Photo from the files of the Ramapo Reformed Church, 3/84

No caption. This is a northwest view of the Education Building, taken before 1960's renovations and removal of southeast tower. No date on photo.





Nomination Names:

The Dutch Reformed Church at Romopock, The Island Church  
The Ramapo Reformed Church Complex

Island Road at West Ramapo Ave., Mahwah, N. J. (Bergen County)

Photo from the files of the Ramapo Reformed Church, 3/84  
Captioned: Church and Churchyard, 1926.

View looking east.



Nomination Names:

The Dutch Reformed Church at Romopock, The Island Church

The Ramapo Reformed Church Complex

Island Road at West Ramapo Ave., Mahwah, N. J. (Bergen County)

Photo from the files of the Ramapo Reformed Church, 3/84

Captioned: M. L. Hartwell in front of Dutch Reformed Church, 1926

View looking northeast.