

NEW JERSEY OFFICE OF CULTURAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES
HISTORIC PRESERVATION SECTION
INDIVIDUAL STRUCTURE SURVEY FORM

AUG 29 1986

HISTORIC SITES INVENTORY NO. 5

HISTORIC NAME: Evangelical Lutheran Church
 LOCATION: of Saddle River and Ramapough,
 Building: 96 East Allendale Road, Building
 MUNICIPALITY: Saddle River
 USGS QUAD: Park Ridge
 OWNER/ADDRESS: Zion Evangelical Lutheran
 Church of Saddle River, NJ

COMMON NAME: Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church
 BLOCK/LOT: of Saddle River, NJ, Building
 1607/10
 COUNTY: Bergen
 UTM REFERENCES: Zone/Northing/Easting

DESCRIPTION

Construction Date: 1820-21

Source of Date: church reports

Architect: Andrew Esler (Esler family tradition) Builder: Andrew Esler, chairman of building committee (Osborn, p. 38)

Style: vernacular Federal

Form/Plan Type:

Number of Stories: 1 (appears 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ on front (east))

Foundation: low, ashlar brownstone

Exterior Wall Fabric: clapboard

Penetration: front: altered, see below, sides: 2 bays, large
 Roof/Chimney: gable; text chimney on south side.
 leaded pointed arched, stained glass windows added in 1884, 1946.

Additional Architectural Description:

Main block: 39' x 48' faces east, overhanging boxed eaves, west facade: lunette in gable with oculus with leaded glass below, doorway with round-arched cornice.

Steeple: Located at east end of roof, a square belfry with louvered, round-arched opening on each side has a denticulated cornice. Above is smaller octagonal-in-plan stage with panels. It is terminated by spire supporting a metal ball surmounted by a directional arrow weathervane.

West Wing: 1 story main part (probably built 1868) has coursed rubble brownstone foundation, gable roof with flare, pointed-arched window with colored glass border. South section of wing, added later (early 20th century), has cobblestone foundation.

East Facade: The gable end. A 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ story wing was attached to the east front of the (cont.)

PHOTO Negative File No. 1-35, slides

Map (Indicate North)



5 SITING, BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION, AND RELATED STRUCTURES half of parcel included in the historic property. Church building faces east. North side is along East Allendale Road. Building set back c. 30-40' from road. Small parking lot at north, then shrubby border. Driveway in front of building leading from cemetery. To south and west is cemetery. Cemetery has hundreds of stones dating from early 19th c. to present. Some are slabs of stone with single or multiple arched tops. Also present are obelisks and other monuments. Near the south border is an early 20th century mausoleum with cobblestone walls. Shrubbery is adjacent to north to the church (cont.)

SURROUNDING ENVIRONMENT: Urban Suburban Scattered Buildings
Open Space Woodland Residential Agricultural Village
Industrial Downtown Commercial Highway Commercial Other

To the east is the Colonial Revival Style Saddle River Municipal Building. The front yard of this build^{ing} also functions as the green in front of the church building. Across East Allendale Road is the Wandell School, Saddle River public elementary school.

SIGNIFICANCE:

The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Saddle River and Ramapough edifice is significant in the ecclesiastical and architectural history of Saddle River and of Bergen County. Built in 1820-21, it is the oldest church building in the Borough of Saddle River and is one of ten remaining Federal Period church ^{buildings} in Bergen County. (Bergen County retains no church buildings erected ^{before} the Federal Period.) The Saddle River building and the Dutch Reformed Church at Ramapock located on Island Road in Mahwah are the only frame buildings of this group. The other eight extant early church buildings are of stone construction and originally had Dutch Reformed congregations. Both of the frame buildings when built had Lutheran congregations, although the Mahwah structure was jointly owned and used by the Dutch Reformed congregation and is now a Dutch Reformed church. The Saddle River ^{building} is the oldest church building in Bergen County associated with a continuing Lutheran congregation and its congregation is believed to be the sixth oldest existing Lutheran congregation in New Jersey (Hilton, p. 12). While the church building has additions and alterations, it retains a small scale, unpretentious vernacular appearance.

Known as Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church of Saddle River, a name officially adopted in 1900, the church occupies an important place in Saddle River's (cont.)

ORIGINAL USE: ecclesiastical PRESENT USE: Same
PHYSICAL CONDITION: Excellent Good Fair Poor
REGISTER ELIGIBILITY: Yes Possible No Part of District
THREATS TO SITE: Roads Development Zoning Deterioration
No Threat Other

COMMENTS:

The church is close to East Allendale Road, a heavily trafficked east-west thoroughfare.

* It is the smallest of the ten early ecclesiastical bldgs.

REFERENCES:

NJHSI 0258-5
HABS NJ-330
NJHSI 2714.9
Junior League Inventory
CKT list
Clifford L. Hilton, A Century and a Half of Worship, Study and Ministry 1821-1971, Zion Lutheran Church, Saddle River NJ,
Saddle River: Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church, 1971. (continued)

RECORDED BY: TRB DATE: 7-26-83
ORGANIZATION: BCOC&HA

ADDITIONAL ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION (continued)

in 1949.
main block /The wing^{is} not as wide as main block and about 2' shorter. The gabled-roofed wing is 3 bays wide with double entrance doors flanked by pointed arched-windows, the 2nd story has 3 pointed-arched windows. There is an oculus in the gable similar to one earlier on facade of main block. Across the front is an open 3-bay porch with square Doric piers and a balustrade.

Facade of east block before 1949: Appears 2½ story with three bays. Round-arched double doors (c. 1884) flanked by two pointed arched windows. At upper level are two pointed arched windows. Between them at a higher level is another pointed-arched window. In the apex of the gable is an oculus. A 3 bay open, one-story porch extends across the central part of the building. It has slender columns and a hip roof. Porch was changed in 1884.

SITING, BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION, AND RELATED STRUCTURES (continued)

building. About 50' to west on same property is a frame parish house building which is a 1930 enlargement of the 1886 Ladies Social Union Hall. This 1½ story, basically L-shaped building has gable roofs, wall dormers and shiplap siding. Its first-story has some pointed-arched windows. Before its 1930 enlargement it was a smaller, rectangular 1½ story structure whose gable end faced the street. It originally was 3x3 bays and had an open belfry on the north end of the roof.

West of the Parish house is a road leading to the cemetery. This road is the west boundary of the parcel of land contributing to the church's significance. On the west side of the road along East Allendale Road is a 2½ frame house built in 1922 as the church's parsonage. West of the southern part of the cemetery is a large Fellowship Hall Building erected in 1962-63 to the designs of McCoy & Blair, White Plains, NY. Both the parsonage and the Fellowship Hall buildings are excluded from the historic nomination. They are located on the western part of the parcel.

The wagon shed records by HABS in 1936-37 is no longer extant. It was located near the front of the building, southeast of it.

REFERENCES (continued)

- J. Hosey Osborn, "Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church, Saddle River, NJ 1821-1921" pamphlet from 100 Anniversary, Oct. 14, 1921. Copy in BCHS Misc. file: Saddle River, Churches. Reprinted in 1946 as "125 Anniversary of the Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church of Saddle River, NJ"
1861 Hopkins map: Lutheran Church
1876 Walker Atlas Lutheran Church
1902 Robinson's map: Lutheran Church
1964 Inskeep map; Lutheran Church built 1821, Andrew Esler (Architect & Master Bldr.)

Landscape. May 1886; Oct, 1886.

Evangelical Lutheran Church (Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church)
96 East Allendale Road, Saddle River.

SIGNIFICANCE (continued)

early history. A number of the area's earliest families were Lutheran, notably the Van Buskirk family. At first these Lutherans attended church in Hackensack-River Edge or in Mahwah (congregation organized in 1715). The increased settlement in the Saddle River area of Lutherans lead to organizing of a local congregation. In 1818 Rev. Frederick C. Schaeffer began preaching to area Lutherans every fourth Sunday using the building of New North Reformed Low Dutch Church in Upper Saddle River (listed on National Register of Historic Places). This arrangement was short-lived, as soon the local Lutherans were refused use of the building. They then held services in the summer in Thomas Van Buskirk's barn and in the winter in the attic of his house (at 164 East Saddle River Road, Saddle River, listed on National Register of Historic Places). In December 1819 they decided to build their own church. Subscribers to the building fund include Reynard and Thomas Achenbach, Thomas, Lawrence and Stephen Van Buskirk, Andrew Esler, Daniel Berdan, David I. Ackerman, Andrew Van Buskirk, John Van Buskirk. These men are members of Saddle River's earliest families. Thomas Van Buskirk and David I. Ackerman each gave half of the land for the church and cemetery. The site chosen was and is located at the area's major cross roads, the point where East Saddle River Road and East Allendale Road briefly follow the same roadbed.

Andrew Esler was chairman of the building committee and he is credited with being ^{the} designer of the church building. Esler, a Saddle River resident, is believed to have erected a number of mills. Church records reveal that the building's cornerstone was laid October 20, 1820, and that the building was dedicated October 14, 1821.

The church building helped define the area between East and West Saddle River Roads along East Allendale Road as the hamlet for the immediate region. About 1825 a school was erected just west of the church building. Briefly the area was called "Lutheranville", as this name appears on an 1829 wedding certificate (Osborn 1946, p. 5) The U. S. Coast Survey map of 1840 verifies that the name "Saddle River" was used then for the area. This map shows scattered buildings along the roads near the church but Saddle River remained a very small hamlet.

The church building has been continually used by its congregation and has a continuing construction history with successive alterations and remodelings. The 1821 appearance is not fully documented. The main block of the current building dates to 1821. As no documents suggest a rebuilding, the buildings's attractive steeple with spire probably dates to 1820-21 as well. The original fenestration of the building has been altered and it is unclear whether the building originally had rectangular or pointed-arched windows. The Mahwah early frame church originally had flat-headed windows, but all the early stone churches in Bergen County seem to have been erected with pointed-arched windows. The existing pointed-arched windows of the east and west facades of the Saddle River Building probably were installed in 1884. It is likely that the front (east) facade shown in early photographs took its appearance in 1884 (see illustration). Church records document several remodellings of the building. In 1868 the interior was redone including replacement of pulpit and the addition of a chancel. Alterations of 1884 include the addition of stained glass windows, a new front door, and alterations to the front piazza (now gone). Ten years later the interior was remodelled with a choir and organ (now replaced) added behind the pulpit and vestry rooms added on the sides of a new pulpit platform. In the early 20th century the interior was redeccorated again, receiving a new altar, pulpit, seats and changes to narthex and gallery. In October 1946 additional stained glass windows were added. In 1949 an addition with narthex, pastor's study, choir facilities, and cloakrooms was added to the front of the building. This addition is small-scaled and is compatible in design and material with the main block. It unfortunately hides much of the original east facade but the main block with steeple continues to dominate the building's composition.

The south and west sides of the church building are bordered by its related cemetery, which contains gravestones dating from the early 19th century to the present. This cemetery provides an appropriate setting for the building in addition to containing graves of early settlers.

West of the church and on its current property is the Ladies Union Hall, erected in 1886 and enlarged in 1930 when it became the parish hall. This frame, 1½ story building is located on the site of Saddle River's school between 1825-85. The Ladies' Social Union founded in 1878 was a women's group of the church. This building has been associated with the church since it was erected in 1886.



Lutheran Church and Hall, Saddle River, N J

Old Post Card
showing church,
wagon shed (not extant
and pre-1930 appearance
of Ladies' Union Hall,
From SRHC files
neg. file #
198351-2



Photograph of circa
1918 showing church,
wagon shed, and
cemetery. From SRHC
file. Neg. file #
198351-1

View looking NW showing southside
of church building and part of
east front.
neg. file # 19848-0



View looking north showing
cemetery southside of church
building, and part of Ladies'
Social Union Hall
neg. file # 19848-2

View looking NW from cemetery and
east and south sides of Ladies' Social
Union Hall, neg. file #19848-1.



Evangelical Lutheran Church Building
96 East Allendale Road, Saddle River

Map showing with dashed lines the approximate boundaries of property included on the Evangelical Lutheran Church Building's survey form. The Fellowship Hall and parsonage, while on the parcel owned by the church, are excluded from the survey form.

