

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**DATA SHEET**

PH0695866

FOR NPS USE ONLY  
RECEIVED JAN 29 1979  
DATE ENTERED APR 6 1979

**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

SIMPSON UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

AND/OR COMMON

**LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER The corner of High and Jefferson Streets

\_\_ NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Perth Amboy

\_\_ VICINITY OF

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT  
15th

STATE

New Jersey

CODE

34

COUNTY

Middlesex

CODE

023

**CLASSIFICATION**

**CATEGORY**

**OWNERSHIP**

**STATUS**

**PRESENT USE**

\_\_ DISTRICT

\_\_ PUBLIC

OCCUPIED

\_\_ AGRICULTURE

\_\_ MUSEUM

BUILDING(S)

PRIVATE

\_\_ UNOCCUPIED

\_\_ COMMERCIAL

\_\_ PARK

\_\_ STRUCTURE

\_\_ BOTH

\_\_ WORK IN PROGRESS

\_\_ EDUCATIONAL

\_\_ PRIVATE RESIDENCE

\_\_ SITE

**PUBLIC ACQUISITION**

**ACCESSIBLE**

\_\_ ENTERTAINMENT

RELIGIOUS

\_\_ OBJECT

\_\_ IN PROCESS

YES: RESTRICTED

\_\_ GOVERNMENT

\_\_ SCIENTIFIC

\_\_ BEING CONSIDERED

\_\_ YES: UNRESTRICTED

\_\_ INDUSTRIAL

\_\_ TRANSPORTATION

\_\_ NO

\_\_ MILITARY

\_\_ OTHER:

**OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME The Board of Trustees and members of Simpson Church

STREET & NUMBER

Simpson Parsonage, 331 High Street

CITY, TOWN

Perth Amboy

\_\_ VICINITY OF

New Jersey

STATE

**LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE.

REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Middlesex County Clerk's Office

STREET & NUMBER

County Administration Building

CITY, TOWN

New Brunswick

STATE

New Jersey

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

New Jersey Historic Sites Inventory (#2422.13)

DATE

1961

\_\_ FEDERAL  STATE \_\_ COUNTY \_\_ LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS

Office of Historic Preservation

109 West State Street

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

Constructed of brick now painted white the Simpson United Methodist Church is a simple rectangular form church with a six bay linear facade fenestration and a front elevation of three bays with a center projecting four story tower. The final level of the tower is the wooden belfry with louvered opening and clock.

The original front elevation drawing reveals that the architect intended to cap the belfry with a soaring octagonal spire with Gothic ornaments and corner pinnacles. The pinnacles were constructed but the spire never came into being. Until they rotted away in the 1930's, the pinnacles lent a whimsical note to this structure.

The foundation of the building and window sills are composed of Newark brownstone. There are two tiers of arched windows in the facade, those in the basement having segmental heads and those above being round headed. Although now filled with beautiful stained glass installed during the 1920's the latter were originally arcade-type windows, i.e., round headed openings filled in with a pair of round headed arches, the space between the three heads being filled in with a small circle. This is a typical Italianate motif, as are the shallow arched pediments used to achieve the transition between the brick tower and the wooden belfry. The heavy dentil cornice and the shallow sunken panels with rounded-off corners are used to articulate the facade. Also of interest are the cast iron beam anchors in the form of five-pointed stars.

A noteworthy feature is the small Queen Anne porch on the Jefferson street side of the Church, added in 1885 to cover the entrance to the infant classroom. The porch is steeply pitched with a round arch supported on turned balusters. The space above is filled with a Gothic trefoil.

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Simpson United Methodist Church

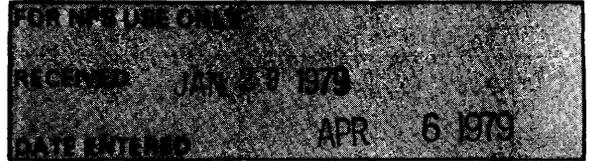
Perth Amboy

Middlesex County

New Jersey 031

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Description (continued)

A unique feature of the first floor meeting room is the pressed tin ceiling which is supported by four cast iron Corinthian columns. Upon ascending the stairs to the second floor room of worship one is greeted by three walls and a ceiling completely sheathed with beautiful cedar boards. Done in the late 19th century this is a feature not generally found in New Jersey as these narrow cedar boards are arranged on the ceiling to form decorative patterns, including a large six-pointed star of David. Unbelievably there was once serious talk of having this woodwork painted white.

The siting of the Simpson Methodist church is on a small corner lot 92 feet by 115 feet in center city Perth Amboy.

# 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 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES

1866-7

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

C. Graham

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Built in 1866-67 this is the second oldest religious building in Perth Amboy and one of few remaining distinctive examples of the Italiante style architecture in the city. The clock in the tower, an unusual feature in a New Jersey religious facade, was installed by the city in 1870 and is still maintained by the municipality.

### Religion

Methodism has a 206 year history in Perth Amboy. It began rather inauspiciously on March 26, 1772, when the Reverend Francis Asbury, having been sent from England by John Wesley to spread the message of Methodism throughout the colonies, delivered the first Methodist sermon ever preached in Perth Amboy. Upon this return to Perth Amboy on July 30, 1772, and subsequent to the second Methodist service held in Perth Amboy, Reverend Asbury was so disheartened that he was prompted to remark that "the Congregation at Amboy was small and they appeared to be such as cared little for the Gospel so that my hope of that place is but slender."

Nevertheless, Reverend Asbury, who was to become in 1786 the first Methodist bishop in America, did not give up all hope. He returned to Perth Amboy on August 26, 1772 and thereupon met with some greater degree of success. The Reverend gives the account that "On Tuesday I went to Amboy and dined with a mixed company, Assemblymen, Churchmen, Quakers, etc. Many of them came to hear me in sport, but went away very still."

Methodism thereafter became established in New Jersey with a reported membership of 200 in 1773 growing to a total of 1,028 by 1783. It was at this point that the Methodist societies felt it necessary to form a bureaucracy of its own. The leap in membership resulted in the Church's formation in 1783 of the East Jersey and West Jersey circuits to which were assigned six ministers. The three districts of East Jersey, West Jersey and Trenton were added in 1784 to govern the circuits and in the same year the Methodist societies of New Jersey designated themselves the Methodist Episcopal Church.

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Noss, John B., Man's Religions, (London, The Macmillan Company), 1969.  
 "Simpson M.E. Church Journal", Vol. 1, No. 1, 1887.  
 "The Perth Amboy News Tribune"  
 Whitehead, William A., Contributions to the Early History of Perth Amboy,  
 (New York), 1856. and Womer, Rev. M.W., History of Methodism In Woodbridge

# 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA And Vicinity, (Milford, the Milford Leader

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 1/4 acre Print), 1902.  
 QUADRANGLE NAME Perth Amboy QUADRANGLE SCALE 1:24,000

UTM REFERENCES			QUADRANGLE SCALE		
ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
A	18	562220			
		4484300	B		
C			D		
E			F		
G			H		

### VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The nominated property occupies city block 127, lot 15 and is approximately 92 X 115 feet in size.

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

# 11 FORM PREPARED BY

Office of Historic

NAME / TITLE Jack Dudas (revised by Terry Karschner, Preservation 609-292-2028

ORGANIZATION	DATE
President-Kearny Cottage Historical Association	July 31, 1978
STREET & NUMBER	TELEPHONE
220 State Street	201-826-3925
CITY OR TOWN	STATE
Perth Amboy	New Jersey 08861

# 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 *Terry Karschner*  
 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

*1-21-79*

TITLE Deputy Commissioner, Department of Environmental Protection DATE January 21, 1979

### FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

*Charles Murray*  
 ATTEST: *William Tolovich*  
 CHIEF OF REGISTRATION

DATE 4-6-79

DATE April 5, 1979

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Significance (continued)

In 1790 New Jersey, with the exception of Elizabethtown, became one district unto itself. This was most likely done so that a sense of order could be maintained among the quickly growing number of circuits found throughout the state. Perth Amboy Methodists were members of the Essex Circuit until 1832 when it was resolved by the members of the Methodist Episcopal Church in Woodbridge that a Woodbridge Circuit be formed. This newly created circuit embraced the regions of Woodbridge, New Dover (now a part of Edison and Colonia) and Perth Amboy.

On February 12, 1835, a committee was appointed at the Quarterly Conference held in Woodbridge to investigate the possibility of erecting a Methodist Church in Perth Amboy. It was later reported by the Committee that the proposed construction would cost approximately fifteen hundred dollars. In 1836 a certificate of organization was filed with the County Clerk in New Brunswick thus giving the church corporate status. Donations were then sought for the building project with men such as Martin Van Buren, then President of the United States, and the statesman Henry Clay coming to the financial aid of the church. The project was completed in 1838 with the erection of a small frame edifice.

The erection of the first Methodist church in Perth Amboy marked an important development in the history of Methodism in this city and state. It not only meant that Perth Amboy Methodists, after 66 years, finally had a place of worship to call their own but it led to Perth Amboy being designated a separate Methodist circuit. This reflects the trend toward the expansion of the number of circuits in New Jersey and hence the growth of Methodist throughout the state.

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Significance (continued)

In 1855 a committee was appointed to purchase a site for a new Methodist church, the congregation having so expanded that the old wooden edifice could no longer accommodate them. In 1863 property for the new structure at the corner of High and Jefferson Streets was purchased. It was here that the present structure was erected in 1867, the cornerstone having been laid on July 24, 1866. On November 12, 1867, the new church was dedicated in the presence of the Rev. Bishop Simpson, after whom the church was named, and the Rev. Bishop James. With the successful erection of the Simpson Methodist church in 1867, Methodism settled down on the firm foundations and demonstrated itself to be a viable religious denomination in this city.

Perth Amboy Methodism is the result of a revivalism in New Jersey and in the country. It can certainly trace its roots back to when the movement was first introduced in the colonies by Wesley and Asbury with the first Methodist sermon, as previously noted, having taken place in Perth Amboy on March 26, 1772. As such, the Simpson Methodist church represents an important part of the intellectual history of Perth Amboy. It represents the national religious movement that today numbers approximately 11 million members. It further represents a movement which introduced a new method of worship into the colonies. The movement marked a divergence from the intellectual approach to religion exercised by the Deists and the Anglicans and the somber, almost morbid, approach of the Quakers. Methodism introduced into the main currents of American religious thought the elements of bodily and spiritual emotionalism as it was characteristic of Methodist services that the worshipers would cry, groan and experience lapses of consciousness. Indeed, Methodism was the genesis for most of the revivalist movements of America since it made the elements of revivalism an acceptable part of American religious thought and practice.

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Significance (continued)

The Simpson United Methodist church in Perth Amboy finds a great part of its importance in the fact that the Methodist movement in America began with congregations such as that which eventually found its home in the Simpson Church. It remains a manifestation of that early attempt to introduce and establish Methodism in the city and state.

Communications

An unusual feature in religious edifices in New Jersey and of note primarily to Perth Amboy is the fact that the Simpson United Methodist Church has housed the town clock since 1870. Although located in the church steeple, the clock is city property. Before being electrified in 1961 the clock was wound by hand by the church sexton. He was forced to climb four sets of ladders rising 85 feet above street level before being able to accomplish this. For this service he was given a small salary, paid annually, by the city of Perth Amboy.

It was decided by the city to locate the clock in the Simpson church steeple due to the fact that at the time the building was erected in 1867 it was a tall structure located in what was then the business center of town. With four faces looking in each direction, each face being six feet in diameter, the clock was visible to all shoppers and businessmen in the district. Thus, the Simpson Church was once the frame of reference to which the business district looked to measure its working day.

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8. Significance, cont.

Architecture

One of the last distinctive examples of the Italianate style of architecture in Perth Amboy, the Simpson United Methodist Church was designed in 1866-67 by builder/architect Charles Graham (fl. 1852-1888) of New York City.

Graham was one of many New York City master craftsmen who completed considerable work in New Jersey during the third quarter of the 19th century. Beginning around 1852 as a stair builder and house trimmer, Charles Graham eventually brought his sons into the business and began undertaking major construction projects. One son, Thomas Graham, studied architecture in the office of Jardine and Thompson before the Civil War and after a stint in the military, began working for his father.

Although a builder/architect for over thirty years in the New York region, little is known of his productivity. After building a new plant at 305-309 East 43 Street in 1881 the firm was incorporated as C. Graham and Sons Company in 1888. Charles Graham died around 1890 shortly after relinquishing presidency of the company to John Graham, a second son.

The Simpson United Methodist Church in Perth Amboy is one of the few known building designs by Charles Graham in New Jersey and a pristine example of his work as a builder/architect.