

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name South Tunbridge Methodist Episcopal Church

other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number Vt. Route 110; 1/3 mi. north of Royalton town line a not for publication
city or town Tunbridge a vicinity
state Vermont code VT county Orange code 017 zip code 05077

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Elva Mulholland, NPS Specialist 1/25/2001
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

Vermont State Historic Preservation Office
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

- entered in the National Register See continuation sheet
- determined eligible for the National Register See continuation sheet
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other, (explain:) _____

Elson H. Beall Signature of the Keeper 3/2/01 Date of Action

S. Tunbridge Church
Name of Property

Orange County, VT
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1		Total

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)
Religious sites, buildings and structures
in Vermont.

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register
0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter Categories from instructions)

Current Functions
(Enter Categories from instructions)

Religious/Religious Facility

Religious/Religious Facility

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter Categories from instructions)

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

Federal

foundation stone
walls brick

roofslate
other wood

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

(See Continuation Sheets pages 1-4)

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National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 7 Page 1

South Tunbridge M.E. Church
Tunbridge, Orange Co., VT

Narrative Architectural Description:

Summary Paragraph

The South Tunbridge M.E. Church is located along the First Branch of the White River on a moderate rise along Vt. Route 110. Built in 1833, the Late Federal style, 1 and 1/2 story, 3x3 bay brick church is the primary structure in what had been a thriving community until the 1950s. It stands just north of a 3x4 bay, clapboarded community house, built in 1920. Immediately to the north of the church are the remains of Tunbridge District 16 School. The church is in fair condition and has had very little alteration since its construction. The school was demolished in the late 1970s and all that remains are its poured concrete foundations. The church is located in a rural setting where dairy farming remains the primary occupation of many residents.

Exterior

The church is built in the Federal style of brick laid in American common bond and pointed in the "tuck and pat" fashion. The foundation is stone, capped by 18" high x 10" thick x 8-10' long limestone. A simple boxed cornice returns partially with the full compliment of moldings about 24" across the gable. The moderately pitched (approx. 8/12) roof is clad with rectangular gray slate, laid in straight courses with a simple, square, hipped-roofed, clapboarded belfry rising above the east facade within the body of the church.

The front facade faces due east. Concrete stairs lead to the front doors. The fenestration here is made up of two 9-panel, 4' x 7' entrance doors with coped granite sills that sit to the right and left respectively of a central bay of 6/6 double-hung windows (glass size approx. 21" x 14") on the main and second floor levels. All door and window openings are recessed about 4" with the window sills composed of a special molded "slipper" shaped brick. The recessed opening extends about four inches beyond each side molding. A return of this distance is accomplished above the head casing with a pair of the molded bricks defining the width of the wooden fans above. Windows are aligned over each door on the second floor and are capped by elliptical wooden fans. The fans, painted green, align with the side casings and sport a sunburst motif with rays extending to a diamond-shaped perimeter

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arrangement (providing the theme for iron-work on the east facade). A similar though considerably larger wooden fan is centered in the gable in the attic story. Small diamond shaped iron plates, about 16" long and 6" wide, are located one to the right and another on the left of the attic fan and are attached to the interior steeple framing. The belfry has a single, centered, louvered opening on all sides except for the west, each capped by a wooden fan.

The south and north facades feature three recessed 6/6 double-hung windows arranged equidistantly across the wall, with wooden fans (similar to those on the front) over each, and the special molded brick at the sill and at the head casing level. The glass size is identical to the front windows.

The rear (west) facade has two typical (same dimensions and type as south, east, north sides) window units. They are without fans, are not recessed, and do not make use of the molded bricks. A single-flue brick chimney, added around 1940, runs up the full height of the facade centered on the ridge. The original chimney runs along the inside of the gable, starts atop the gable plate, and is now cut-off just below the roof-line. Significant bulging of the structure here is related to a deterioration of the frame at this location.

Interior

The interior is accessed through either of the two 9-panel entrance doors. The front entrance vestibule is about 8 feet deep and is flanked on the north by a stairway that winds up to a now fully enclosed balcony area approximately the same dimensions as the vestibule below. At the south end of the vestibule is a large closet that is currently used for firewood storage. The flooring is softwood (perhaps spruce) 10-16" wide that runs across the gable and is fastened with a mix of cut and wire nails. Walls are plaster on brick on the exterior and plaster on accordion, panel-sawn lath on the interior walls. Beaded, vertical wainscoting about 48" high lines the exterior (east) and interior (west) walls. Type B cut nails are used on exterior paneling and a mix of wire and cut nails are used on the interior wall. A pair of flat, 6-panel doors, centered in the vestibule, lead into the sanctuary. Plaster repairs (apparent in vestibule and in the sanctuary) are evidence that the original entrance to the sanctuary aligned with the exterior doors.

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South Tunbridge M.E. Church
Tunbridge, Orange Co., VT

The sanctuary takes up the remainder of the structure's interior space. A raised pulpit area runs along 2/3 of the west end, beginning at the south wall and extending in an irregular fashion out 10-14' from the west gable wall. It is put together with wire nails and is built of machine planed pine trim and paneling. The ceiling is vaulted with pressed tin (installed in 1926) over the original plaster on lath. Walls are lined with wainscotting similar to that in the entrance vestibule to the height of the window sills. It is attached with type B cut nails to nailers included within the brick with no plaster beneath. Plaster runs from a simple cap there up to a tin molding that separates it from the vaulted tin ceiling. Window casings are flat and 6" wide on plaster grounds. Head casings extend 1" beyond the sides. The window units behind the pulpit (west end) feature splayed jambs with flat casings attached with wire nails. The sash here is identical to that found throughout the church. There is no evidence that the openings are not original, however, it is apparent that the moldings and jamb were updated on the interior. A pair of square columns that support the west-end framing of the belfry extend down through the ceiling to corresponding framing members at the first floor level. They are cased with flat, 8" wide pine (hand planed and attached with cut nails) and are embellished only where they disappear through the tin ceiling with a collection of simple cavetto and fillet wood moldings. The flooring is similar to that found in the entrance vestibule though it is covered with wall-to-wall carpeting.

A pair of wood-burning stoves are located one in each corner of the east end of the sanctuary. The manufacturer, whose name is stamped above the loading door is *Rathbone, Sard & Co., Albany, Chicago and Detroit.* Above the secondary air intake (possibly for burning coal) in what was at one time a mica lens is a casting in a pattern that mimics the window/fan arrangement of the church. An interesting arrangement of black stove pipe connects the stoves to each other and runs along the perimeter of the space exiting as one pipe above the pulpit into the new chimney.

Pews are aligned, slightly canted towards the center, in two rows with aisles along the south, north, and center. They are made up of what appears to be a collection of old and newer elements. The backs are basswood and hand planed, the ends are ash and cut with a scroll saw, and the seats are machine planed basswood (covered with

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South Tunbridge M.E. Church
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Narrative Architectural Description (cont.):

unattached padding). A Prescott organ (made in Concord, NH) sits in what was formerly the choir ("singers") loft. It measures approx. 4' long, 2' deep and 32" high.

A handsome King Post Truss arrangement makes up the roof system. The frame here is a collection of hewn principle timbers and frame-sawn intermediate rafters and bracing elements. Girts, plates, and rafters appear to be hemlock, the main King post white pine, and the bracing components and miscellaneous elements a mix of maple and other native hardwoods. The belfry framing is somewhat independent with the east bent supported by the east gable tie-beam and the west bent, running down through the sanctuary onto first floor girts.

S. Tunbridge Church
Name of Property

Orange County, VT
County and State

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark " x " in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for the National Register listing.)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark " x " in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Social History

Period of Significance

1833-1947

Significant Dates

1833

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

n/a

Cultural Affiliation

n/a

Architect/Builder

Hutchinson, William

Colburn, E.

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

University of Vermont, Baily-Howe Library

S. Tunbridge Church

Orange County, VT

Name of Property

County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 2 acres

UTM references

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	<u>18</u>	<u>700760</u>	<u>4858780</u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing
2			

3			
	Zone	Easting	Northing
4			

see continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name / title Steven Melanson

organization University of Vt. Historic Preservation date April, 29, 1997

street & number South Prospect St. telephone 802-656-4006

city or town Burlington state VT zip code 05401

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name South Tunbridge Methodist Church, c/o David Howe, Chairman Board of Trustees

street & number Town Farm Road telephone 802-889-3332

city or town Tunbridge state VT zip code 05077

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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South Tunbridge M.E. Church
Tunbridge, Orange Co., VT

The South Tunbridge Methodist Church

Statement of Significance

The South Tunbridge Methodist Church, built in 1833 by William Hutchinson and E. Colburn, in South Tunbridge, Vermont meets National Register Criterion C by being one of the finest ecclesiastical examples of the late Federal style in the Orange County region. Among its distinctive original features are the unusual semi-elliptical fans of radiating sunburst "slitwork" that top the recessed window openings, the ogee shaped molded bricks that form the window sills and corbeling, and the king-post roof truss framing. The church exhibits the subtlety and restraint that are trademarks of both the genre as well as of the early 19th century Vermont community of which it has remained a vital and significant part for over 160 years. Secondly, the church meets National Register Criterion A by being significant in respect to its association with the development of the community that grew and prospered around it. Along with an early 20th century, balloon frame community center, the church is all that remains of a once busy and prosperous village that included at one point the Tunbridge District #16 schoolhouse, a blacksmith shop, sawmill, parsonage, and over one dozen homes. The structure is being nominated under the multiple property submission, "Religious buildings, sites, and structures in Vermont." It clearly meets the registration requirements for the property type "Churches."

Historical background and significance

Located along the First Branch of the White River on a rise just off what has been traditionally called River Road, the Church with its simple, hip-roofed, clapboarded belfry, is today easily missed as traffic speeds by on Vt. Route 110. The structure (along with the nearby community house), along the banks of the First Branch of the White River, was the center of a once thriving community, having as its central focus the church.

Until construction of the church in 1833, the fledgling Methodist community in Tunbridge had met at what was called "the old parsonage," known as the Amander

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South Tunbridge M.E. Church
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Statement of significance (cont.)

Osman place and occupied at the time by David Brewer, which was just north of the present church. At a meeting of the Methodist Society on January 25, 1833, it was agreed that a "convenient House for worship of God" was necessary. A Board of Trustees was formed and, according to tradition, they accepted as a gift a plot of ground about nine rods square given by David Brewer. There is further evidence that the parcel was sold to the Methodist Society by Brewer for \$20 in cash and \$10 worth of grain. A Quit Claim Deed, recorded in the Tunbridge Town Land Records in Book Eleven, page 296 and dated December 10, 1846, from James Hutchinson to the Stewards of the Methodist Episcopal Society, bears out the later scenario. The transfer of the property from Brewer to Hutchinson is unclear; however, there is evidence that the two were owners of much property in the area of the church and might have swapped parcels at some point. A sum of \$1,500 was raised through the sale of pews and construction began in the spring of 1833. The minutes of the Society's meetings that year record the progress of the project. By June 28, construction was well underway with the "carpenter work," which included the king-post roof truss framing as well as the belfry frame, "let to" William Hutchinson and E. Colburn. The bricks, about 80 M., are "struck-off" by Benj. Cushman (whose kiln lay just north of the church along the banks of the First Branch) for \$2.48 per M. It is not known who laid them, but it is recorded that the tenders were Samuel Cleveland (who lived just across the river from the church) and Burton Preston. The lumber, a mix of basswood, butternut, black ash, spruce, and pine was procured from Philip Farnum, M.D. Rowell, Elias Lyman, James Hutchinson, Worcester English and Wm. Morrill for an average price of \$3.00 per M. The iron work, which included nails, spikes and other hardware, was manufactured by T.M. Buck, whose blacksmith shop was just southeast of the church. There is a record of excess materials being sold off in October of 1833, suggesting that construction was, for the most part, complete by that time. No dedication is recorded; however there is anecdotal evidence that a dedication was held the following spring. It is truly remarkable and significant that a structure of this size and complexity could be planned and completed using strictly locally produced and manufactured materials in a matter of only six months.

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South Tunbridge M.E. Church
Tunbridge, Orange Co., VT

Statement of significance (cont.):

There are a number of red brick buildings in the South Tunbridge/South Royalton area. Many are built in the Federal style and several have inset wall panels similar to those found at the South Tunbridge Church. The Russell Farm, located about 1/2 mile west of the church, bears a particularly striking resemblance to the Methodist Church. Its present condition, with many unsympathetic alterations, is lamentable, but the similarities are still apparent. The Russell Farm is noted in the 1877 *Beer's Atlas* as the A.A. Northrup place. Further along the First Branch of the White River and north of the South Tunbridge Church are several homes that are built of a brick that is similar in appearance to those used in the construction of the church. The Benj. Cushman homestead, the origin of much of the brick used in Tunbridge, is about 1/2 mile north of the church. Evidence of the brick yard is reported to be visible in what is now cultivated bottom land along the First Branch.

With construction complete, the South Tunbridge Methodist Church began a long and steady relationship with the surrounding community. The basic tenants of the American Methodist experience are summarized by Francis Asbury¹ as being "a community of love, nourished by a fraternity of word, ordered in conference." A gradual building of the community, a result of both the church's solid presence and the economic viability of the region, reflects the Methodist philosophy. The church originally belonged to the "Vershire Circuit", which included most towns in Orange County. A series of ministers, based in the County Seat (Chelsea) served the congregation. E.J. Scott is mentioned as secretary of various committees for the Vershire Circuit in 1833 and was most likely the first minister for South Tunbridge. In his will, probated in 1843, David Brewer gave the rights to the portion of his estate that was adjacent to the church to the Methodist Society. The value was in excess of \$1,000.00 and this allowed the church to separate from the Vershire Circuit and hire its own minister.

By 1864 the village of South Tunbridge included Tunbridge District #16 school, a blacksmith shop, a post office, the A. Wells circular saw and shingle mill as well as over a dozen homes. Despite periodic surges and down turns in the local economy

¹ Clark, Elmer, ed., The Journal and Letters of Francis Asbury Nashville: Abington Press, 1958.

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South Tunbridge M.E. Church
Tunbridge, Orange Co., VT

Statement of significance (cont.):

brought about by wars, recessions, depressions, and the like, the community continued to be strengthened and sustained by the dynamic presence of the Church.

The construction of the community house in 1921 marked the beginning of what might possibly be the little settlement's last period of prosperity. The church was, at this point in history, the center of activity for much of town of Tunbridge, and, according to John Howe in The History of the South Tunbridge M.E Church, was the scene of plays, social club meetings, the Tunbridge PTA, the Home Demonstration Club, 4H Club, Ladies Aid, 3M (a church-based organization for children), Adult Bible Class, oyster suppers, chicken pie suppers, and sugar-on-snow parties. At times the lights were on there five and six nights a week.

The Church and Community House are quiet for most of the year now. The congregation has dwindled to a handful, the town schools have been consolidated and the turn of the century schoolhouse has been demolished. But the church stands, nearly as solid as ever, a little worse for wear and tear but essentially little changed from the way it looked in 1833 when its limestone capstones were set, its bricks laid, and the handsome king-post frame lifted to the heavens.

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South Tunbridge M.E. Church
Tunbridge, Orange Co., VT

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South Tunbridge M.E. Church
Tunbridge, Orange Co., VT

Verbal Boundary Description:

Property starts at a point .4 miles north of the Royalton/Tunbridge town line along Vt. Route 110. From a point that is determined by the southeastern most corner of the property currently owned by Everett and Janice Broe and recorded in Vol. 33 on Page 408 of the Tunbridge Land Records. From this point the boundary runs in a southerly direction along the edge of Vt. Route 110 for a distance of 140 feet; from this point west 151 feet to a point along a barbed wire fence at the base of a knoll; from here 135 feet north to a point that is along the southerly boundary of the Broe property; then east 155 feet to the point of beginning.

Boundary Justification:

For the purpose of this National Register nomination the boundary includes the church and remains of the concrete foundation of Tunbridge District #16 School only. The remaining land which includes the Community House and a small balloon frame barn is not included within these boundaries. Further research would show that the Community House is eligible for the National Register.