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United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# 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 National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any 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 certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).**

### 1. Name of Property

historic name DOVER STONE CHURCH  
other names/site number THE STONE CHURCH; "THE NATURAL CURIOSITY"

### 2. Location

street & number N/A (ACCESSED VIA STONE CHURCH LANE)  not for publication  
city or town DOVER PLAINS  vicinity  
state NEW YORK code NY county DUTCHESS code 027 zip code 12522

### 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 at the following level(s) of significance:

national  statewide  local

Rachel A. Purpant DBAPO 10/2/14  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property \_\_\_ meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official Date

Title State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

### 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register  determined eligible for the National Register  
 determined not eligible for the National Register  removed from the National Register

other (explain): \_\_\_\_\_

Joe Edson H. Beall 12-2-14  
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

**DOVER STONE CHURCH**  
 Name of Property

**DUTCHESS COUNTY, NEW YORK**  
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**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**  
 (Check as many boxes as apply.)

- private
- public - Local
- public - State
- public - Federal

**Category of Property**  
 (Check only **one** box.)

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

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
0	0	buildings
1	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
0	0	<b>Total</b>

**Name of related multiple property listing**  
 (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

N/A

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

N/A

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**  
 (Enter categories from instructions.)

LANDSCAPE: natural feature  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**Current Functions**  
 (Enter categories from instructions.)

LANDSCAPE: natural feature  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 RECREATION & CULTURE: outdoor recreation  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**  
 (Enter categories from instructions.)

N/A  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**Materials**  
 (Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: N/A  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 walls: N/A  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 roof: N/A  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 other: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

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**Narrative Description**

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**Summary Paragraph**

Dover Stone Church, known otherwise as the Stone Church and at times in the nineteenth century as “The Natural Curiosity,” is a geological formation of metamorphic rock situated in a densely wooded location. This geographic feature is located approximately one-half mile west of the New York Route 22 corridor in the Dover Plains area of central-eastern Dutchess County, New York. Wassaic and Amenia are located to the north of Dover Plains on Route 22, while Dover Furnace and Wingdale are located to the south. New York’s border with Connecticut is located less than five miles to the east of this location and beyond that is the U.S. Route 7 corridor. There is no public vehicular access to the site; instead, visitors approach Dover Stone Church on foot, via a walking path from a trailhead situated off of Route 22 on Stone Church Lane. A wood sign, fashioned so as to resemble the distinctive arched opening of the Stone Church, marks the beginning of the trail that leads to the site, the initial portion of this path being a straight route lined with deciduous trees. A flight of stairs leads downward from the trailhead to this path and, as such, accounts for the difference in grade between these two areas. The first part of the path, that which is lined with trees, traverses an open field, after which the trail enters a forested area and joins Stone Church Brook. Dover Stone Church was created by this eponymously named watercourse, which carved out its physical features and which eventually meets the Ten Mile River further to the east, beyond the Route 22 corridor. The corresponding nomination boundary consists of a total of 65.48 acres of land.

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**Narrative Description**

Dover Stone Church, “The Natural Curiosity,” remains largely as it was described in 1836:

The Stone Church consists of a fissure in the rock, on a declivity of the mountain, and near its base, through which passes a rippling streamlet, which in its passage down until it reaches the groundwork or floor of the church, forms numerous and extensive cascades, some of thirty feet in height, and from ten to fifteen in breadth. This current has been looked upon as the great architect of the work. The opening, though so narrow at the top, as to appear almost closed, gradually widens to its base so that it forms a vast arch of very considerable regularity, of perhaps twenty feet in span and upwards. Its greatest depth is probably two hundred feet, and the inner or principal apartment (it being divided into two spacious halls) is about seventy feet in length, and is well lighted and aired from above. The antechamber, as it may be termed, or hall of entrance, is separated from the church by a huge mass of rock which has detached itself from the side or roof, and is aptly styled the pulpit...<sup>1</sup>

The Stone Church, as the above account indicates, is a distinctive geological formation of metamorphic rock. A steep, Gothic-arch-like aperture leads into a large open cave, or chamber—which was likened to a temple or house-of-worship, and thus the site’s name—through which Stone Church Brook falls, as a waterfall, before continuing its course. The site was described, in geographic terms, in 1843 by Professor William H. Mather:

At the “Stone Church,” as it is called, half a mile southwest of Dover plains, the mica slate may be seen well exposed. The Stone Church is a place of some notoriety as a natural curiosity. It is a deep chasm of the mica slate rock, worn out much larger by the wearing action of a stream of water. It is very irregular in its dimensions, broader at the bottom than at the top, with large masses of rocks in the bottom, over which it is necessary for the visitor to clamber to explore its more remote parts. Segments of pot-holes may be seen in the rocks, worn by the action of pebbles and the rapid flow of water. Garnets were seen in the rocks at this place, and a single crystal of staurotide.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *The Family Magazine, or General Abstract of Useful Knowledge*, vol. III (New York: Redfield & Lindsay, 1836), 14-15.

<sup>2</sup> W.M. Mather, *Geology of New-York, Part I* (Albany: Carroll & Cook, 1843), 443.

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**8. Statement of Significance**

**Applicable National Register Criteria**

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for 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.

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

**ENTERTAINMENT/RECREATION**

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**Period of Significance**

ca. 1830- ca. 1930

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**Significant Dates**

N/A

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**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 old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

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**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

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**Architect/Builder**

N/A

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**Period of Significance (justification)**

The period of significance, ca. 1830 to ca. 1930, relates to the cited area of significance, Entertainment/Recreation, and reflects the ongoing history of the site as a tourist destination into the early twentieth century.

**Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)**

N/A

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**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph**

Dover Stone Church, a distinctive geological feature in eastern Dutchess County, was a celebrated and much-visited tourist destination in New York State by the middle decades of the nineteenth century. The site was highlighted as a remarkable natural curiosity in published accounts as early as the 1830s; it found its greatest literary champion in the figure of the well-known Hudson Valley author and historian, Benson J. Lossing (1813-1891), who, in 1876, published *The Dover Stone Church*, a brief romantic account of its physical characteristics and perceived history. Lossing was among those who referenced traditional accounts of Dover Stone Church's association with the Pequot War, and specifically with the flight of the Pequot sachem Sassacus and a small band of warriors into New York from Connecticut in 1637; by some early accounts this small group of warriors took respite at the Stone Church prior to being captured and executed by the Mohawk. While specific documentary evidence confirming the nominated site as the location of this historic seventeenth-century event remains elusive, longstanding tradition has nevertheless shaped perception and forged a strong connection between the two in the public mind. Notwithstanding this traditional history, the site shares strong associations with nineteenth century Hudson Valley tourism and the related romantic impulse towards venerating nature and the wilderness and as a vital aspect of a uniquely American cultural identity. In 1847 Dover Stone Church was visited and sketched by the noted Hudson River School painter Asher Brown Durand (1796-1886), a further affirmation of its visibility as a scenic destination in the mid-nineteenth century. Dover Stone Church is being nominated at the local significance level in association with Criterion A, in the area of Entertainment/Recreation, in recognition of its long-established history as a tourist destination in Dutchess County and the Hudson Valley and one which enjoys associations with the romantic writings of Benson J. Lossing and the work of artist Asher B. Durand.

**Narrative Statement of Significance**

*Historical Context*

Dover Plains is located within the Town of Dover, which was formed from adjacent Pawling in 1807. Both of these towns contained lands formerly within The Oblong, a narrow strip of acreage on the New York side of its border with Connecticut which was central to the settlement of disputed land claims between these two states. Dover is in large measure defined geographically by the fertile valley associated with the Ten Mile River, bounded to the east and west by higher landmasses associated with the Taconic Mountain range. The region, now often referred to as the Harlem Valley, was variously known as the Oblong Valley and by the Native Americans as "Weebatook." It was in this region in the early eighteenth century that members of the Pequod and other New England tribes settled, at a location known as "Pishgatchtigoock," near present-day Kent, Connecticut. European-American settlement here was initiated in the second quarter of the eighteenth century and commenced fully in the post-Revolutionary War period. Agriculture, tanning and the refinement of locally quarried iron ore were the preeminent pursuits here in the first decades of the nineteenth century. In the mid-nineteenth century the New York & Harlem Railroad reached this region, thereby diminishing the importance of earlier overland turnpike routes which had served travelers and drovers en route to more populated centers to the south. The railroad played a considerable role in Dover's development, sustaining as it did the emergence, in the second half of the nineteenth century, of both the dairy industry and a local tourism-based economy, of which Dover Stone Church was a central component.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> This historical analysis has been drawn from information developed by the former Town of Dover historian Donna Hearn and from Philip H. Smith, *General History of Dutchess County, from 1609 to 1876 inclusive* (Pawling, NY: 1877), 149-174.

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The New York & Harlem Railroad, established in the 1830s as a means of providing efficient travel between lower Manhattan and Harlem, had, by the 1840s, been extended northwards into Westchester County. In 1845 legislation was passed authorizing the further northward extension of the railroad to Albany. The railroad reached Dover Plains and Pawling in 1849 and nearby North East, or Millerton, the following year.<sup>4</sup> Its completion helped transform those Harlem Valley hamlets it bisected by providing efficient, direct and consistent communication with New York City. Although the arrival of the railroad at the mid-century point bolstered the local tourist economy, Dover Stone Church had previously emerged as a notable destination for travelers, albeit one not as easily accessible from the metropolitan New York area. Tourism in the Hudson Valley also predated the railroad age, and instead had its beginnings in another transportation advance, the invention of the steamboat by Robert Fulton in 1807. Steamboat travel offered quick and convenient communication between the New York metropolitan area and the Hudson Valley, where the monuments of the American Revolution could be observed, along with the region's remarkable mountain and river scenery.<sup>5</sup> Only later did the railroad assume the vital role of conveying American and foreign travelers to scenic and historic destinations in the Hudson Valley.

Dover Stone Church was recognized as a place which could inspire leisure travel on the New York & Harlem soon after its extension northward into the Dover Plains area. As early as 1851 the railroad was touting Fourth of July excursion trips that included, as part of the travel itinerary, the Stone Church or what was otherwise termed "The Natural Curiosity."<sup>6</sup> The following year G.M. Perry, the proprietor of the Collamore House in New York City, was advertising the availability of accommodations in Dover Plains, which were noted as being in close proximity to Dover Stone Church, described as "a place of resort for pleasure."<sup>7</sup> Perry was presumably the same George Perry who, as early as the 1830s, operated the so-called Stone Church Hotel in Dover Plains, which by one account was located about one hundred yards from the nominated site. A Universalist minister, George Rogers (1804-1846), recorded a visit to Perry's establishment in Dover Plains in 1831, which included a tour of the destination from which the hotel took its name.<sup>8</sup> One group of visitors in the mid-1830s recalled, in an account published in *The Family Magazine*, returning to the hotel following their site-seeing excursion; "...we partook of an excellent repast furnished by the enterprising proprietor, Mr. Perry, whose gentlemanly manners, together with the pains he has been at so as to render a visit to Dover agreeable and interesting, entitle him at least to this passing notice."<sup>9</sup> The Stone Church was recalled at that time as "a singular and interesting curiosity, and its examination is worth a visit to Dutchess County." It was further noted that it had been visited by approximately 1,100 visitors between June and December 1832.<sup>10</sup>

A local newspaper account, ca. 1918, noted that the hotel was in later years converted into "the barn at the south east corner of the Coyle property."<sup>11</sup> The following is from 1929 and provides a more detailed account:

The razing of the old barn in the rear of Mr. Elliot's residence, which was known as the Stone Church Hotel, until the late Arthur E. Bangs turned it into "The Dover Plains Military Academy," in 1880, is about

<sup>4</sup> Heyward Cohen, Jack Shufelt and Lou Grogan, *The Coming of the New York & Harlem Railroad* (Pawling, NY: Louis Grogan, 1989).

<sup>5</sup> Frances F. Dunwell, *The Hudson River Highlands* (Columbia University Press, 1991), 32-34.

<sup>6</sup> "Fourth of July—Excursion," *New-York Daily Tribune*, 3 July 1851, vol. XI, no. 3186.

<sup>7</sup> "Public Boarding House," *New-York Daily Tribune*, 4 June 1852, vol. XII, no. 3473.

<sup>8</sup> George Rogers, *Memoranda of the Experience, Labors and Travels of a Universalist Preacher* (Cincinnati: John Gurley, 1845), 108.

<sup>9</sup> *The Family Magazine*, 15.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 14-15.

<sup>11</sup> "Dover Plains News" in the *Harlem Valley Times*, undated fragment ca. 1918-20.

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completed. It was moved back from the street many years ago, but was still considered an old land mark, but has now passed.<sup>12</sup>

In 1838 the *Poughkeepsie Casket* devoted a cover page to the Stone Church, including a large woodcut view. An extensive description was offered, along with the following poem, penned by Sarah A. Downer a few years prior:

THE STONE CHURCH

Beneath a mountain's side  
Where musing anchorets might love to dwell,  
Deep in the shadows of the tangled dell,  
Where the lone riplets glide  
In the silent coursings through the verdant spot  
Stands the low petal to this hallowed grot.

No lofty dome  
Or lengthened aisle invites the wanderer's feet,  
Where brethren of a common faith oft meet—  
The spirit's home—  
But cragged steeps the narrow pathway bind,  
Where the rank verbage round their bases wind.

No holy, toiling bell  
Arrests the footsteps of the passer-by  
Shaking his bosom with deep thoughts that lie  
In the heart's cell;  
But gentle currents on soft air float,  
Still and unbroken, save by wild bird note.

All is mute and hush  
No pealing organ through the archways ring,  
Lifting the tuneful soul on seraph's wings,  
But the quick rush  
Of falling cataracts burst upon the ear,  
Singing one glad song through the live-long year.

No cushioned rounds  
The ragged desk adorn, or cloistered case,  
With labored homily intent to please—  
But solemn sounds,  
More eloquent than words around him roll,  
Stealing deep homage from the awe-struck soul.

Here nature is all pure;  
And true the raptures by her influence stirr'd;  
We meet the fullness of the promised word,

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<sup>12</sup>"Dover Plains," *Pawling-Patterson News*, 22 March 1929, vol. XXVIII, no. 12.

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To man secure—  
Whether we seem him in some humble cot,  
'Mid columned temples, or in lonely grot!<sup>13</sup>

Early veneration of the Stone Church, in published accounts dating from the 1830s onward, made much of its perceived similarities to a house of worship—its physical attributes were likened to the architectural features of a church, among them the Gothic-arched aperture, the “pulpit,” and the “galleries”—and it was additionally viewed as a sublime expression of none other than the Creator himself. The account offered in the *Poughkeepsie Casket* in 1838 suggested that the Stone Church recalled the earliest places of worship employed by man; “Such were the temples in which, during the early ages of the world, mankind were taught to worship...”<sup>14</sup> Dover Stone Church was considered by some observers as a place fashioned by the hands of God himself, at the time of Creation. This sentiment was expressed in, among other sources, *The Family Magazine* in the mid-1830s; “The heart, touched by the religious gloom and sublimity of the place, acknowledges the power of the Creator and rises in admiration of his works.”<sup>15</sup>

These were by no means isolated themes, but instead ones which played to the prevailing cultural attitudes of the time. It was during the second quarter of the nineteenth century that American artistic and literary figures elevated America’s wilderness and scenic wonders as cultural symbols which distinguished the new nation from the old empires of Europe. This romantic impulse formed an important aspect of early nineteenth century American nationalism during a period defined by a growing cultural self awareness, as the nation sought the proper iconography with which to define itself. In the absence of the time worn ruins that spoke to Europe’s centuries-old history, Americans would instead celebrate their preeminent national asset, the vast mountains and wilderness areas that characterized the continent. This extensive and largely untrammeled landscape was additionally seen as the ideal backdrop in which to contemplate God and religion, a veritable Garden of Eden as yet unspoiled by human endeavor. As noted by art historian Barbara Novak, in the introduction to her work *Nature and Culture*, “In the early nineteenth century in America, nature couldn’t do without God, and God apparently couldn’t do without nature.”<sup>16</sup>

New York’s Hudson River Valley and Catskill Mountains were central to the development of this sentiment and provided inspiration to many American artistic and literary luminaries of this era, among them Thomas Cole, Washington Irving, and William Cullen Bryant. The renowned nineteenth century American landscape painter Asher Brown Durand visited the Stone Church and the Dover Plains area of Dutchess County in the late 1840s. Durand, an engraver by training who earned considerable note in that field, was subsequently encouraged to focus on painting by the early American art collector, Luman Reed. It was in this period that Durand became acquainted with artist Thomas Cole (1801-1848) and the poet William Cullen Bryant (1794-1878), pivotal figures in the development of romanticism in American art and literature. Cole and Durand were foremost among a core group of early American landscape painters for whom the Hudson River School was named. The two men shared a strong interest in depicting the American wilderness, which they viewed as the physical manifestation of God, and traveled, sometimes together, to the Catskill and Adirondack mountains of New York, among other destinations. Durand had apparently come to Dover Plains in 1847 to visit the Stone Church, though the precise circumstances of his visit, and

<sup>13</sup>*Poughkeepsie Casket: A Semi-Monthly Literary Journal*, vol. II, no. 18 (15 December 1838).

<sup>14</sup>Ibid

<sup>15</sup>*The Family Magazine*, vol. III.

<sup>16</sup>Barbara Novak, *Nature and Culture: American Landscape and Painting, 1825-1875* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 3.

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who he traveled with, are not presently known. Two works of art by Durand are directly associated with this visit. The first, a pencil sketch, depicts the Gothic arched entrance to the Stone Church and additionally depicts a small wood footbridge which visitors used to traverse the adjacent stream. The second work, a fully developed canvas dating to 1848 and presumably developed from field sketches and notes, depicts the Taconic Mountain and river valley scenery of the Dover Plains area. A biographical portrait of Durand published in *Graham's Magazine* in 1854 noted that his "Scenery of Dover Plains" was, along with "A Wood Scene," "among his most popular works."

The greatest early champion of Dover Stone Church was none other than the author, illustrator and historian, Benson J. Lossing. A native of Dutchess County who was orphaned at age 11, Lossing first worked as an illustrator and journalist in Poughkeepsie during the 1830s, where he was associated with the *Telegraph* and the *Poughkeepsie Casket*. By the later 1830s Lossing had relocated to New York City, where he sought greater opportunity in his field. It was toward the end of the 1840s that he conceived one of his signature works, the compilation of an illustrated book on the American Revolution; in 1853 his *Pictorial Field-Book of the Revolution* was published, a substantial work that won him great acclaim. As a native of Beekman and yet later as a resident of Dover, Lossing was well familiar with the Stone Church. In 1876 he published *The Dover Stone Church*, which included two illustrations by his hand. "It is a very interesting natural curiosity, with romantic and picturesque surroundings," Lossing wrote, "and has attracted thousands of visitors, and will attract thousands more."<sup>17</sup>

Lossing described the Stone Church as follows:

The Church has two apartments; the inner one was the largest, being about seventy feet in length. The mass of rock called the "pulpit," which seems to have fallen from the roof, separated them. At the farthest extremity of the inner apartment was a beautiful waterfall, over which a stair-case led to extensive ledges of rocks at a height of thirty feet, forming commodious galleries overlooking the body of the Church. Altogether, this natural excavation is so wrought as to give to the beholder the idea of a temple of worship; and the stillness that reigns within, broken only by the music of gently falling water, and the subdued gloom which there continually abides, are admirably calculated to inspire the contemplative mind with devotional feelings, and to lift the thoughts to the great Architect of the universe beside whose works the little creations of proud man are only atoms...<sup>18</sup>

It appears that Lossing was among the first to allude, in published form, to a connection between the Stone Church and the flight of the Sassacus in the early seventeenth century during the Pequot War; "...like other weird places in our country," he wrote, "[it] has its traditionary [sic] legend." Lossing recounted the flight of Sassacus, who he termed "the haughty sachem of the Pequods," and a small band of warriors from the shore of the Long Island Sound in Connecticut into the valley of the Ten Mile River in present-day Dover.

There, on the site of Dover Plains village, tradition tells us, they encountered a strong band of Mohegan hunters, who were also trained warriors, from who Sassacus and his men barely escaped destruction after a fierce conflict, and took refuge in the watery cavern now known as the Dover Stone Church, a cool and safe retreat at that mid-summer time, when the stream was low and the cavern was mostly dry. The Mohegan hunters did not discover their retreat; and a week afterwards, when the latter had left the valley, Sassacus and his young braves who had been joined by a few other fugitives... They made their way to the land of the Mohawks, near Albany, craving the hospitality of that nation. That hospitality was denied...<sup>19</sup>

<sup>17</sup>Benson J. Lossing, *The Dover Stone Church, With Two Illustrations* (Amenia: DeLacey & Walsh, 1876), 2.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid, 4-5.

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Lossing concluded this account by recalling the delivery, to Governor John Winthrop of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, of part of the skin and hair of Sassacus, his brother, and five other sachems as evidence of their execution by the Mohawk.

Countless nineteenth century accounts provide information relative to the experiences of those who visited the Stone Church, which one observer noted in the 1860s as “a singular and interesting curiosity, and well worth examination by all admirers of nature and natural phenomena.”<sup>20</sup> Interest in the site was no doubt compounded by its being touted in sources such as Barber and Howe’s *Historical Collections of the State of New York* (1842) and John F. French’s *Gazetteer of New York* (1860). Among the earlier detailed accounts of a visit to the site is one dating to 1839 and published in *The Friend*, which recounted an exploration of the Stone Church as part of a visit to Dutchess County, the latter described as “*the land of open-hearted hospitality, neat white farm-houses, intelligent inhabitants, and sweet cakes.*”

Leaving our horse to be fed at the “Stone Church Hotel,” where it proved extremely difficult to find either landlord, barkeeper, or hostler, we walked to the “Stone Church.” This is a quarter of a mile from the village, on the west side of the valley, which here runs north and south. R. having visited the place before, directed us to seek the head of a stream which we beheld flinging its clear waters onwards towards the center of the valley. As we approached the hill side, we found our *babbling* guide issuing out of a cave, into which we entered, and were in the vestibule of the “Stone Church.” We stood within this first apartment, and quietly gazed for a time on the scene before us. There was a solemn twilight appearance, and coolness about the place, in unison with sober thought, but not with joyous or rapturous exclamation. The mountain before us appeared as though it had been rent by an earthquake, and being parted a few feet asunder, gave us an upward view to the blue sky above. We now proceeded forward, and picked our way cautiously *up* the chasm, *down* which our guide was leaping, and dashing, and turmoiling. We could but observe how like some folks, who, petty tyrants at home, are yet all gentleness to the world, it smoothed and tranquilized its ruffled and foam-whitened face, and softened its voice to a murmur, before it issued into open day. Now we were on level ground, now climbing with the help of a hand rail and slats nailed on a couple logs, elevated at an angle of 45 degrees over a chasm, where the water went tumbling and spraying, speaking loudly of broken bones to those who should let go their hold above. We then entered the largest opening or apartment in the “Church,” which probably was twenty-five feet in diameter at the bottom, and which gradually widened over head, until its precipitous sides grew sufficiently inclined to retain soil. This was covered with a dense forest, lifting its upright columns towards the blue dome of this temple in nature. The frosts of the winter, and the raging of the elements, had destroyed the ladders which formerly enabled visitors to scale the heights above. Having ascertained that we could not ascend, we prepared, against our inclinations, to return the way we entered. The descent, though far more difficult and dangerous than the ascent, was performed safely, yet not without sundry exclamations from one of my companions, that they *could* not get down. Having issued from the cave, into the hot air without, we then ascended on the surface to a considerable elevation, from which we had beautiful views of the valley, its white dwellings, and bright yellow stubble fields. But smoke from a charcoal pit was floating around us, mules were laboring in sight, and sheep were baaing at our feet; among such accompaniments it was evidently no place for sentimental excitement, so we descended the mountain...<sup>21</sup>

Various accounts dating to the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries chronicle the continued popularity of the Dover Stone Church as a tourist destination for hikes, picnics and other such leisurely amusements. The

<sup>19</sup>Ibid, 11-13.

<sup>20</sup>*Arthur's Home Magazine*, June 1868.

<sup>21</sup>“A VISIT,” *The Friend*, vol. XII, 1839.

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site was not without its hazards, though, and visitors were at times injured, or worse. In 1929 Alfred Brooks, the nine-year-old son of a Yale professor, died from injuries sustained by his fall from a rock ledge; he was visiting the Stone Church with family members and students from Vassar College.<sup>22</sup>

Dover-area residents have long celebrated the Stone Church as a unique aspect of their local history and geography; it has served as inspiration for countless paintings, poems and other such creative expressions. In 1908 Richard Maher offered a “Requiem for the Stone Church” in his book *Historic Dover*:

It has seen the Red Man fade and die like some exotic flower.  
It has seen the White Man come in all the freshness of civilization;  
Its melodious stream has chanted a requiem over his generations dead and gone,  
And still the ancient arch guards the wild ravine, and the never-tiring stream,  
As it patiently hews out newer and more fanciful forms,  
gives to the breeze the son of endurance  
"Men may come and men may go,  
But I go on forever, ever,  
I go on forever."<sup>23</sup>

*Conclusion*

Dover Stone Church has since the 1830s been a celebrated and much-visited tourist destination in New York's Hudson Valley. Early interest in the site corresponded with an era in which Americans took especial pride in the natural environment and interesting geographic features, an interest that corresponded with a developing sense of national identity and a decidedly romantic impulse that found expression in the arts and literature. It was also in this period that “natural curiosities” such as the Stone Church became tourist destinations touted in contemporary literature; the extension of railroad transportation to the region, near the mid-century point, made Dover Stone Church all the more accessible to the public. The site was celebrated by the noted author and historian, Benson J. Lossing, in *The Dover Stone Church* (1876), and was visited and sketched by the noted nineteenth century Hudson River School painter, Asher Brown Durand, in 1847. Further historical interest is found in the traditional accounts of Dover Stone Church's association with the flight of the Pequot sachem Sassacus and a small band of warriors into New York from Connecticut in the 1630s, although these cannot presently be substantiated.

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**Developmental history/additional historic context information** (if appropriate)

N/A

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<sup>22</sup>“Plunges to Death,” *The Pawling Chronicle*, 11 May 1929.

<sup>23</sup>Richard Maher, *Historic Dover* (1908).

**DOVER STONE CHURCH**

Name of Property

**DUTCHESS COUNTY, NEW YORK**

County and State

---

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

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**Bibliography** (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

**Books & Periodicals**

*Arthur's Home Magazine*, 1868.

Cohen, Heyward and Jack Shufelt and Lou Grogan. *The Coming of the New York & Harlem Railroad*. Pawling, NY: Louis Grogan, 1989.

Dunwell, Frances F. *The Hudson River Highlands*. Columbia University Press, 1991.

*Harlem Valley Times*, ca. 1918-20.

Lossing, Benson J. *The Dover Stone Church, With Two Illustrations*. Amenia: DeLacey & Walsh, 1876.

Mather, W.M. *Geology of New-York, Part I*. Albany: Carroll & Cook, 1843.

*New-York Daily Tribune*, 1851, 1852.

Novak, Barbara. *Nature and Culture: American Landscape and Painting, 1825-1875*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1980.

*Poughkeepsie Casket: A Semi-Monthly Literary Journal*, 1838.

Rogers, George. *Memoranda of the Experience, Labors and Travels of a Universalist Preacher*. Cincinnati: John Gurley, 1845.

*The Family Magazine, or General Abstract of Useful Knowledge*, vol. III. New York: Redfield & Lindsay, 1836.

*The Friend*, 1839.

**DOVER STONE CHURCH**  
 Name of Property

**DUTCHESS COUNTY, NEW YORK**  
 County and State

**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 # \_\_\_\_\_  
 recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

State Historic Preservation Office  
 Other State agency  
 Federal agency  
 Local government  
 University  
 Other  
 Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): \_\_\_\_\_

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreage of Property** 65.48 acres  
 (Do not include previously listed resource acreage.)

**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	<u>18</u> Zone	<u>617621</u> Easting	<u>4621892</u> Northing	5	<u>18</u> Zone	<u>616116</u> Easting	<u>4621614</u> Northing
2	<u>18</u> Zone	<u>617912</u> Easting	<u>4621524</u> Northing	6	<u>18</u> Zone	<u>616060</u> Easting	<u>4621813</u> Northing
3	<u>18</u> Zone	<u>617877</u> Easting	<u>4621419</u> Northing	7	<u>18</u> Zone	<u>617070</u> Easting	<u>4621828</u> Northing
4	<u>18</u> Zone	<u>617399</u> Easting	<u>4621343</u> Northing	8	<u>18</u> Zone	<u>617315</u> Easting	<u>4621838</u> Northing

**Verbal Boundary Description** (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The boundary for this NRHP nomination is shown on the enclosed 3 maps, which have been rendered at a scale of 1:24,000, 1:12,000, and 1:8,000.

**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundary for this NRHP nomination has been drawn in order to correspond with this geological formation and in part reflect the nature of the surrounding topography; every effort has been made to include only lands which provide necessary context for the Stone Church, without additional buffer land. As drawn, the boundary includes the Stone Church and a portion of Stone Church Brook. The western and southern boundaries use established tax boundary lines, in the absence of a definable historic line of demarcation, while the remaining areas of the boundary, save for the easternmost part of the northern boundary, follow natural and topographic features. A total of 65.48 acres of land are included in the boundary.

**DOVER STONE CHURCH**

Name of Property

**DUTCHESS COUNTY, NEW YORK**

County and State

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title William E. Krattinger

organization NYS Division for Historic Preservation

date April 2014

street & number PO Box 189

telephone (518) 237-8643

city or town Waterford

state NY

zip code 12180

e-mail [William.Krattinger@parks.ny.gov](mailto:William.Krattinger@parks.ny.gov)

**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **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. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Continuation Sheets**
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

**Photographs:**

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map.

Photographs by William E. Krattinger, July 2013

TIFF format, digital files at NYS DHP, Peebles Island State Park, Waterford, New York 12188

0001 General view looking to southwest; entrance to Dover Stone Church at center

0002 Detail view showing entrance into Dover Stone Church

**Property Owner:**

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

name Town of Dover

street & number \_\_\_\_\_

telephone \_\_\_\_\_

city or town \_\_\_\_\_

state \_\_\_\_\_

zip code \_\_\_\_\_

**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.460 et seq.).

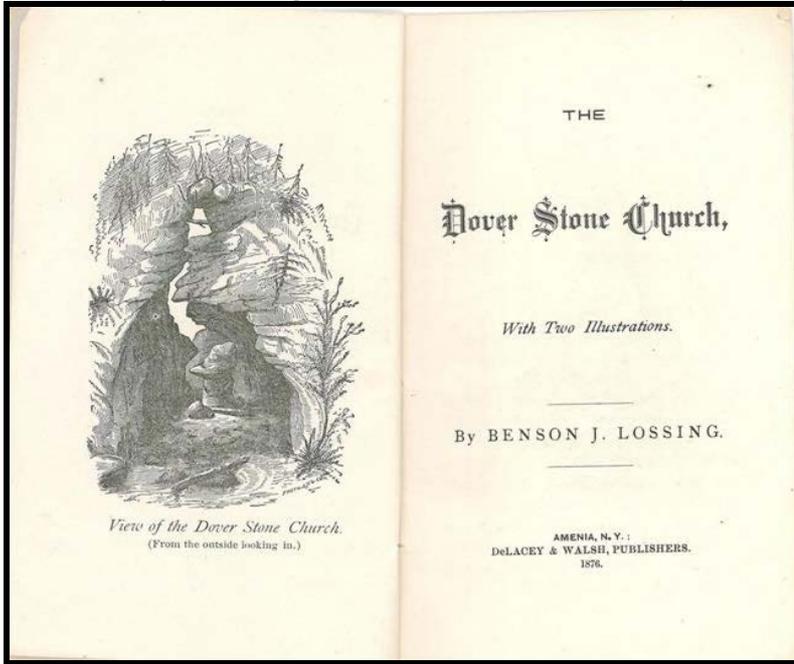
**DOVER STONE CHURCH**

Name of Property

**DUTCHESS COUNTY, NEW YORK**

County and State

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 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 Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.



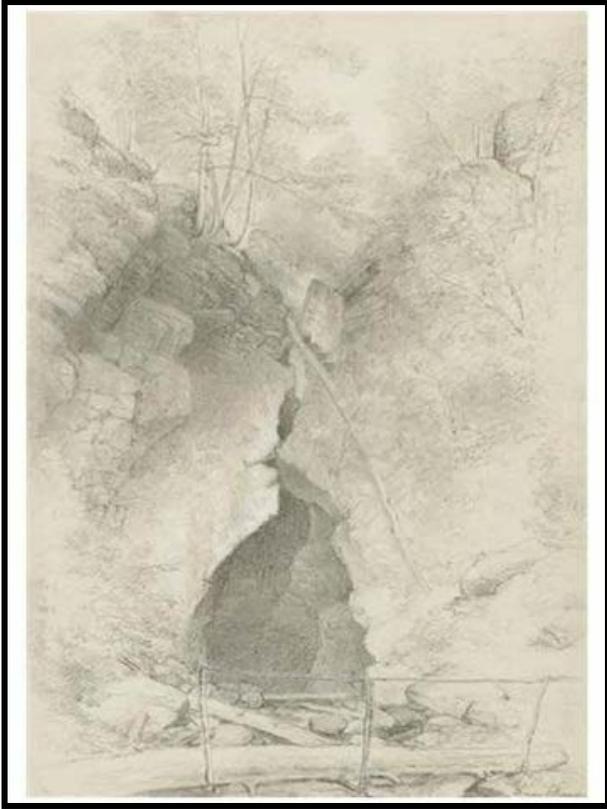
ABOVE, Cover page and frontispiece from Lossing's *Dover Stone Church*, 1876; BELOW, Dover Stone Church as sketched by Asher B. Durand, ca. 1847.

**DOVER STONE CHURCH**

Name of Property

**DUTCHESS COUNTY, NEW YORK**

County and State

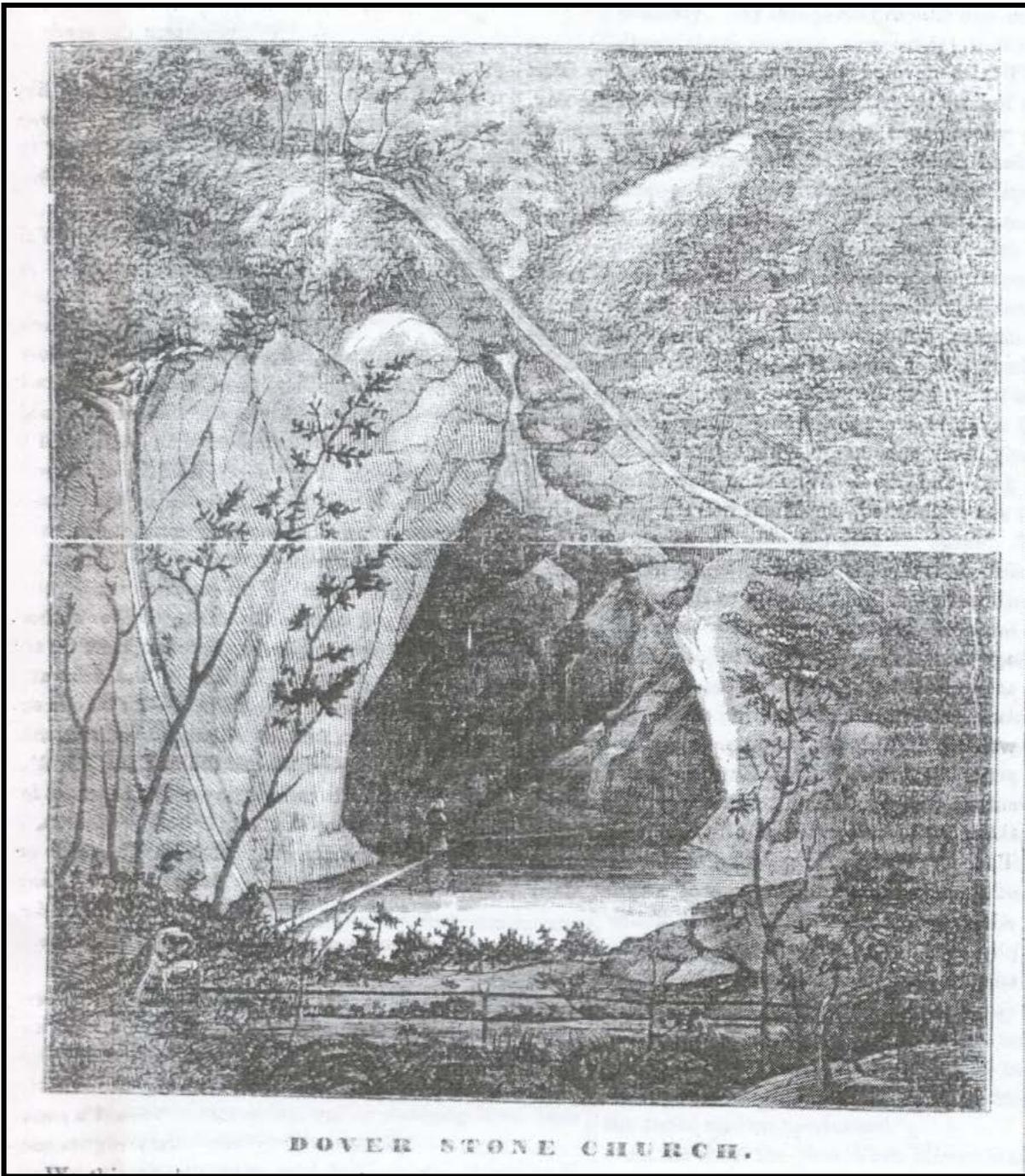


**DOVER STONE CHURCH**

Name of Property

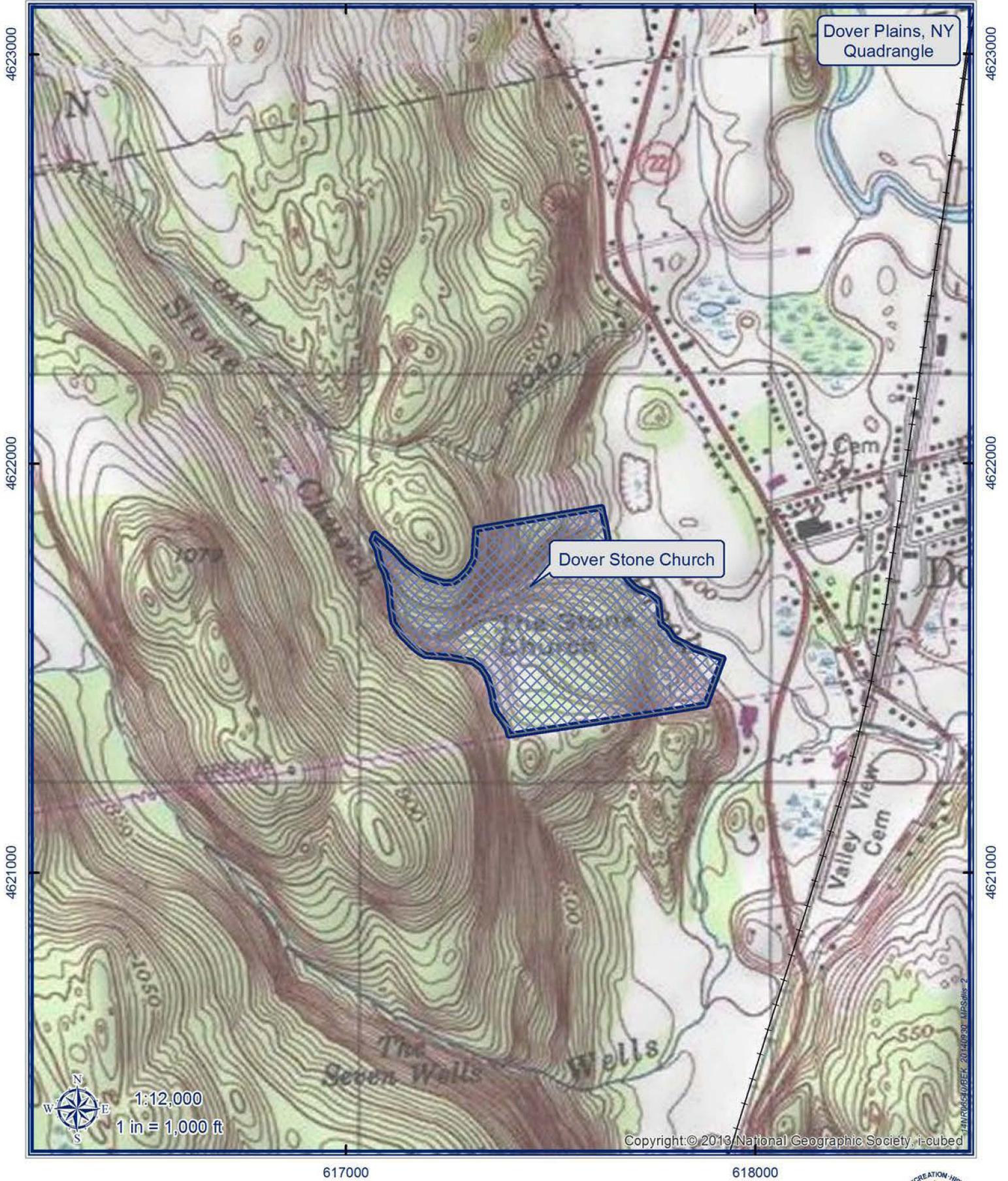
**DUTCHESS COUNTY, NEW YORK**

County and State



Dover Stone Church as depicted in the *Poughkeepsie Casket*, 1838





Coordinate System: NAD 1983 UTM Zone 18N  
Projection: Transverse Mercator  
Datum: North American 1983  
Units: Meter



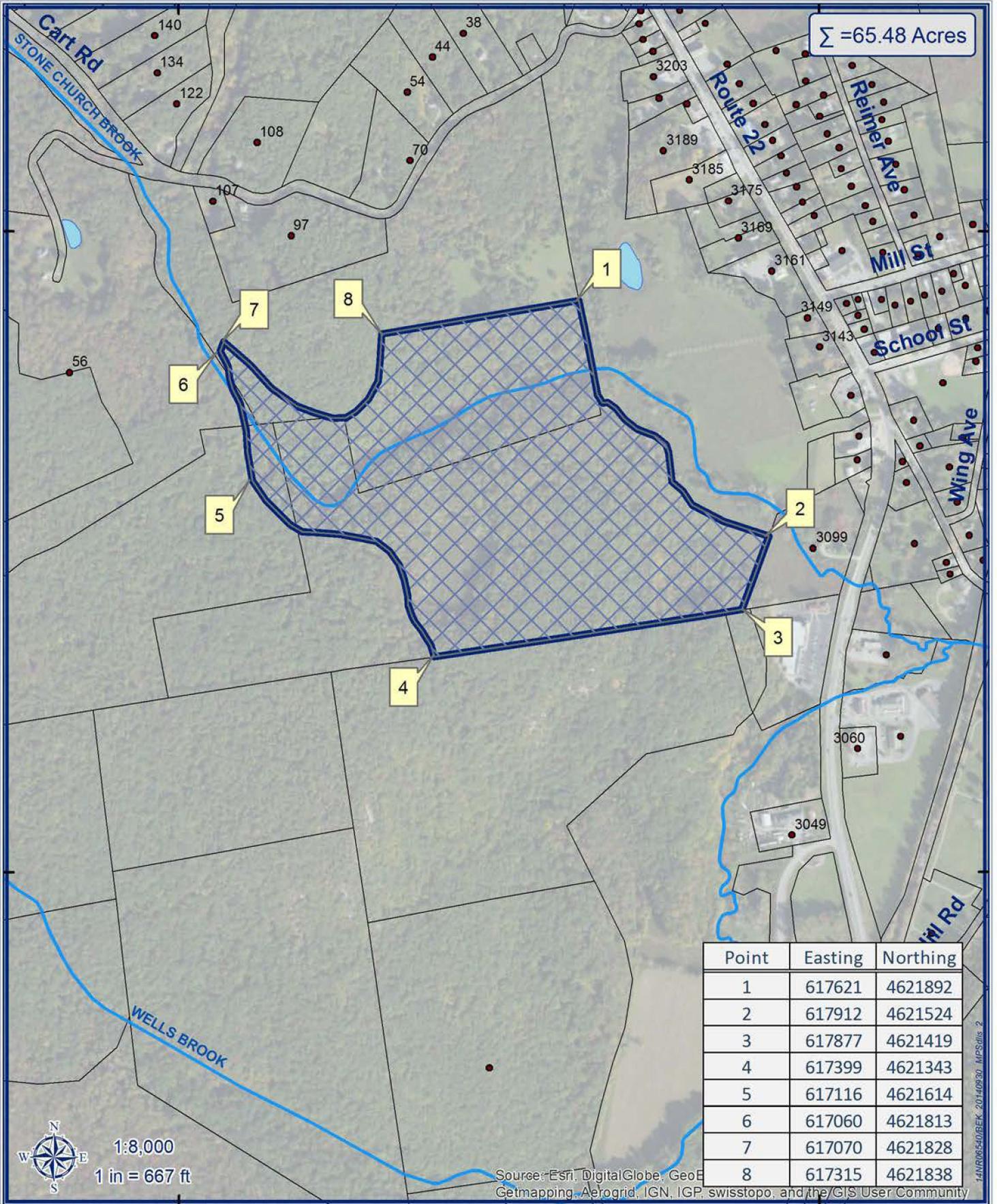
 Stone Church  RR

Tax Parcel Data:  
Dutchess Co. RPS  
[www.co.dutchess.ny.us](http://www.co.dutchess.ny.us)



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Σ = 65.48 Acres



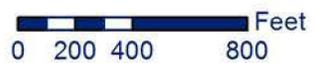
Point	Easting	Northing
1	617621	4621892
2	617912	4621524
3	617877	4621419
4	617399	4621343
5	617116	4621614
6	617060	4621813
7	617070	4621828
8	617315	4621838



1:8,000  
 1 in = 667 ft

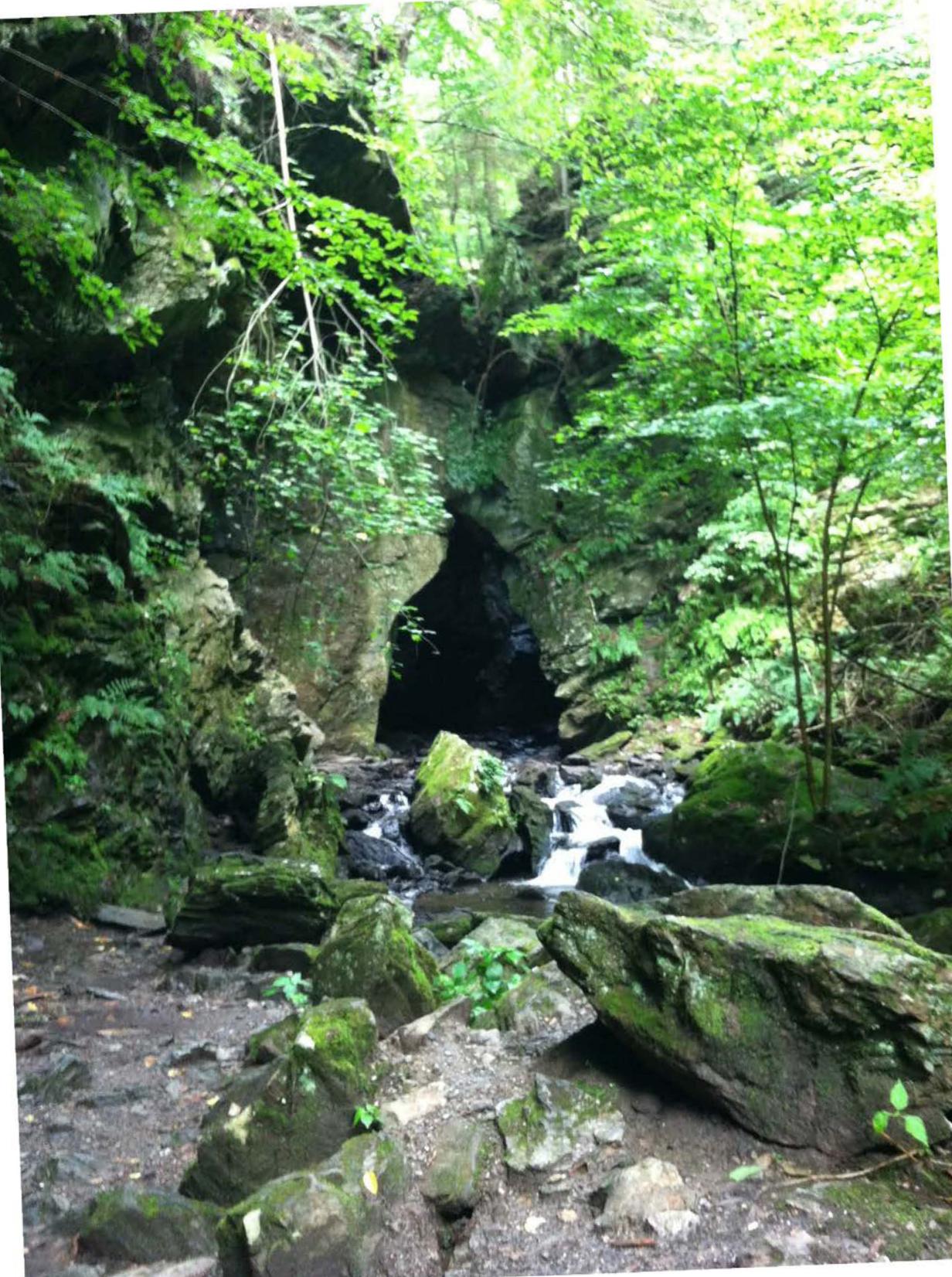
Source: Esri, DigitalGlobe, GeoEye, AeroGRID, IGN, IGP, swisstopo, and the GIS User Community

Coordinate System: NAD 1983 UTM Zone 18N  
 Projection: Transverse Mercator  
 Datum: North American 1983  
 Units: Meter



Tax Parcel Data:  
 Dutchess Co. RPS  
[www.co.dutchess.ny.us](http://www.co.dutchess.ny.us)







UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY NAME: Dover Stone Church

MULTIPLE NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: NEW YORK, Dutchess

DATE RECEIVED: 10/17/14      DATE OF PENDING LIST: 11/12/14  
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 11/28/14      DATE OF 45TH DAY: 12/03/14  
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 14000981

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N    DATA PROBLEM: N    LANDSCAPE: N    LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N  
OTHER: N    PDIL: N    PERIOD: N    PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N  
REQUEST: N    SAMPLE: N    SLR DRAFT: N    NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT     RETURN     REJECT    12-2-14 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

Entered in  
The National Register  
of  
Historic Places

RECOM./CRITERIA \_\_\_\_\_

REVIEWER \_\_\_\_\_ DISCIPLINE \_\_\_\_\_

TELEPHONE \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N

If a nomination is returned to the nominating authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the NPS.



## New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation

Division for Historic Preservation  
P.O. Box 189, Waterford, New York 12188-0189  
518-237-8643



7 October 2014

Alexis Abernathy  
National Park Service  
National Register of Historic Places  
1201 Eye St. NW, 8<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Washington, D.C. 20005

Re: National Register Nominations

Dear Ms. Abernathy:

I am pleased to enclose the following two nominations, both on disc, to be considered for listing by the Keeper of the National Register:

Dover Stone Church, Dutchess County  
Barringer-Overbaugh-Lasher House, Columbia County

Please feel free to call me at 518.237.8643 x 3261 if you have any questions.

Sincerely:

Kathleen LaFrank  
National Register Coordinator  
New York State Historic Preservation Office