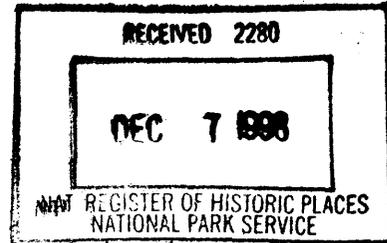


NPS Form 10-900
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(Approved 3/87)

OMB No. 1024-0018

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM



1595

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries. Use letter quality printer in 12 pitch, using an 85 space line and a 10 space left margin. Use only archival paper (20 pound, acid free paper with a 2% alkaline reserve).

1. Name of Property

historic name Reformed Presbyterian Church of Vernon

other names/site number Covenanter Church

2. Location

street & number W234 S7710 Big Bend Road N/A not for publication

city, town Vernon N/A vicinity

state Wisconsin code WI county Waukesha code 133 zip code 53186

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	No. of Resources within Property	
		contributing	noncontributing
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)		
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u>2</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	<u>1</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>1</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> objects
		<u>4</u>	<u>0</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing:

N/A

No. of contributing resources
previously listed in the
National Register N/A

Reformed Presbyterian Church of Vernon
Name of Property

Waukesha Co., WI
County and State

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this X 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 X meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

Alicia J. Cook
Signature of certifying official

11/18/98
Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this 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:)

Robert H. Beall 1.7.99

Bob
Signature of the Keeper Date

6. Functions or Use

Historic Functions
(enter categories from instructions)

Current Functions
(enter categories from instructions)

RELIGION/religious facility
FUNERARY/cemetery

RELIGION/religious facility
FUNERARY/cemetery

Reformed Presbyterian Church of Vernon

Waukesha Co., WI

Name of Property

County and State

7. Description

Architectural Classification

Materials

(enter categories from instructions)

(enter categories from instructions)

MID-19TH CENTURY/Greek Revival

foundation STONE/ashlar

walls WOOD/clapboard

roof ASPHALT

other BRICK

WOOD

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Reformed Presbyterian Church of Vernon is located in the northeast quadrant of the Big Bend/CTH ES intersection in the Waukesha County Town of Vernon. Situated on top of a small hill, the church is clearly visible from STH 164, CTH ES and I-43, all of which are adjacent to Big Bend Road. In addition, the property is visible from Big Bend Road, from which the church has a setback of approximately 30.5 m (100 ft). Historically, the area around the church was open and farmed. At present, the vicinity is being developed. Immediately southwest of the church is a modern gas station/convenience store, while several yards to the south (across CTH ES) is a McDonald's Restaurant and a Stein's Garden Center--both modern structures. There are two buildings, one site and one object associated with the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Vernon: the church itself, a carriage shed, a cemetery and a cemetery entrance gate. All are considered to be contributing elements.

Church (contributing, 1856):

Oriented on an east/west axis, this Greek Revival church is comprised of a front gable main block and a smaller gabled rear wing (vestry). Both sections rest on a coursed ashlar foundation. The one-story building is sheathed with clapboard, while the roof is covered with asphalt shingles. Three brick chimneys project from the roof line of the main block. Two are symmetrically positioned toward the west gable end, and the third is located atop the roof ridge at the east end wall.

A modern wooden porch deck with turned railings fronts the west end. A set of four steps leading to the main entrance is centered within the porch; a staircase consisting of five steps is located to the right side of the porch. This porch was built during a renovation effort beginning in 1971; nevertheless, it is sympathetic with the historical

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character of the church.¹ The centrally placed main entry is original. It includes a wooden, four-panel double-door surrounded by simple wooden architrave trim, consisting of single pilasters supporting a plain entablature. A triple-hung, twelve-light sash window is located on each side of the entry; three similar, symmetrically placed windows punctuate both the north and south sides. Pilaster corner boards support an unadorned, wide frieze that terminates with deep gable returns. A second entrance, which includes a wooden, four-panel single door, occupies the north wall of the vestry. A single two-over-two light sash is centered within each of the two remaining vestry walls.

¹The new structure replaced a simple stone stairway consisting of three steps set between two short retaining walls made of stone. It is unclear whether or not the stone staircase was the original. For example, one source notes that the wooden porch and steps constructed during the 1970s were built according to the original design. See Pat Slattery, "'Dead' Church Comes Alive Again," *Waukesha Freeman*, 25 August 1973, clipping contained within Reformed Presbyterian Church of Vernon file (hereafter cited as RPCV file), Waukesha County Museum (hereafter cited as WCM), Waukesha, WI. Yet, a man who helped to build the new deck during the renovation believes the stone stairway was the original. Jim Watson, the son of John Watson--the leader of the renovation--feels that the remnants of Lannon stone and a concrete block footing he helped to remove were materials dating to the construction of the church. Jim Watson, Telephone conversation with Laura Abing, 10 April 1997. Other individuals associated with the Church were questioned to learn more about the stone porch and its date of construction; however, nothing substantive was discovered. The turned railings were erected in 1995. A photograph from 1977 depicts no railing around the central staircase, while the side stairway features a plain wooden rail with post supports. Photograph of John Watson with Reformed Presbyterian Church of Vernon in Background, *Waukesha Freeman*, 5 November 1977, photo from Waukesha County Museum Collections, WCM. Other sources regarding the porch: Watson, Telephone conversation with Abing; Libbie Nolan, "Heritage Revisited," *Landmark* 20 (Autumn/Winter 1977), 21; Photograph of Reformed Presbyterian Church of Vernon, 1961 (photographer unidentified), photo from WCM Collections, WCM (see Photographs section).

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Reformed Presbyterian Church of Vernon
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The 1970s renovation left the historical interior largely intact. Beyond the west entry is a small foyer, above which is a balcony extending the width of the church. There is a wood-burning stove occupying each of the corners nearest the main entry. Eight rows of horizontally arranged oak pews are located at each side of the central aisle.² Psalm books, some dating from 1903, remain in the pews. At the front of the central aisle is a small offertory table, behind which is a raised platform. The latter supports a pulpit and three chairs. The chairs rest along the east end wall, and a doorway leading to the vestry is situated left of center. Two vertically oriented pews are located on each side of the pulpit. The church retains its original wooden wainscoting and wall-to-wall, diamond and star-patterned carpet. The wallpaper was replaced during the renovation; however, the large print pattern enhances the historic feel of the interior. An original large, kerosene-burning chandelier with glass globes hangs approximately in the middle of the church. Lastly, the east wall features two original, bracketed, kerosene lamps that generally flank each side of the pulpit, while a kerosene lamp is located in each of the corners with the stoves.³

²The pews, which were cleaned during the 1970s renovation, appear to be original. Nevertheless, a newspaper article from 1985 states "Little remodeling was done and, except for the pews, it [the church] is very much the same today as it was in 1854." Whether or not the pews are original was not verified. Regardless, their appearance adds to the historic integrity of the interior. Sources: Slattery, "'Dead' Church,"; D.E. Wright, "Tales of an Old Vernon Church," *Mukwonago Chief*, 23 October 1985, RPCV file, WCM.

³Description based upon observation as well as the following: Nolan, "Heritage Revisited," 21; "The Vernon Reformed Presbyterian Church and Cemetery," Typed document, n.d., copy obtained from Walter Loehman, a trustee of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Vernon, and in possession of Heritage Research, Ltd., Menomonee Falls, WI.

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Carriage Shed (contributing, ca.1856):

During the 1970s renovation, one of two original carriage sheds was restored using the original lumber. It seems as if the second shed, apparently attached to the first by 1960, was simply removed (see Photographs section to compare historic and current appearance). The extant shed is located east of the church and consists of four buggy stalls. The gabled structure is covered with wide, vertical board siding and utilizes mortise-and-tenon construction, secured with wooden pegs. Entrance is gained through the south facade which, aside from an overhanging roof, is entirely open. The carriage shed is in fair to good condition.⁴

Cemetery (contributing, ca.1847):

A cemetery is located immediately south of the church and includes approximately 159 gravestones. The headstones are of different styles and sizes and are set in rows perpendicular to the church building. One source notes that the "well proportioned lots and alleys, uniform from the first and throughout the cemetery," indicate the site was planned before many burials occurred. Another source substantiates this claim, remarking that when the approximately two-acre property was acquired for the Church members, half was designated for "burial of the dead." The earliest marker belongs to William McLeod, the first Covenanter in Vernon Township (see Section 8). The stone is dated 1845. It is one of few pre-dating the planning for the church and cemetery, which began in the early 1850s.⁵

Entrance Gate (contributing, ca. 1910):

The entrance gate is metal and appears to consist of galvanized pipe. It stands roughly ten to twelve feet high. Interior posts support two end poles, between which at the top is suspended a sign indicating "R.P. Church and Cemetery." A historical marker is attached to one end pole. Posted in 1958, the marker describes when the church was organized and built (see Section 8). The gate appears to have been installed at the same time as the fence running along the front of the church property. The support posts are the same as those of the fence and the mesh used to support the church sign is the same

⁴Description based upon observation and "The Vernon Reformed Presbyterian Church and Cemetery."

⁵Smith Faris, "The Reformed Presbyterian Church of Vernon," Typed manuscript, n.d., p. 2, in RPCV file, WHM; "Reformed Presbyterian Church," Waukesha Freeman, 5 April 1952, clipping in RPCV file, WCM.

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as the upper portion of the fencing mesh. The entrance gate is in good condition.⁶

⁶ The carriage shed is believed to be contributing because it has been an integral part of the church's historic setting since both it and the church were built and also because such resources are actually much rarer today than even the churches themselves. Likewise, the cemetery is also considered to be a contributing element because it has been an integral part of the setting of the church throughout the church's entire history. The cemetery, which was formed by at least 1847, predates the creation of the church and carriage shed by nine years and it is believed that this fact dictated the location of the church when the time came to build one. The cemetery gate, built ca.1910, and designed and built expressly for this cemetery, is also believed to contribute to the historic associations of the cemetery.

Reformed Presbyterian Church of Vernon

Waukesha Co., WI

Name of Property

County and State

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties: nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria A B C D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) A B C D E F G

Areas of Significance

(enter categories from instructions)

Period of Significance

Significant Dates

1856-1910⁷

1856⁸

ARCHITECTURE

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Unknown

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

Statement of Significance:

Properties used for religious purposes are not ordinarily considered eligible for the National Register; nevertheless, the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Vernon fulfills criteria consideration A outlined in *National Register Bulletin No. 16A*. The Reformed Presbyterian Church of Vernon is a fine, highly intact, and beautifully restored example of Greek Revival architecture. This gabled, clapboard-clad structure has symmetrically placed windows, pilastered corner boards, a wide frieze, and architrave trim around the main entry and deep roof. According to *Cultural Resource Management in Wisconsin*, Virginia and Lee McAlester's *A Field Guide to American Houses* and John J.G. Blumenson's *Identifying American Architecture*, these features characterize the Greek Revival style. Consequently, the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Vernon is believed to be eligible under Criterion C at the local level of significance because it is an excellent, characteristic example of the small but beautiful rural churches that were built in this style early in the state's history and which are now rapidly becoming extinct as the rural portion of

⁷The period of significance for the property is 1856-1910, which spans the years between the dates of the construction of the church and carriage shed (1856) and the cemetery gate (1910). This choice has been dictated by NR guidelines, which state that the period of significance is dictated by the particular Criterion selected, in this case, C (Architecture). Consequently, the period of significance in this nomination is based on the dates of construction of its contributing built elements.

⁸As noted in the preceding footnote, church records indicate that the church was finished in 1856.

See continuation sheet

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the southern half of the state becomes increasingly subject to development pressure.⁹

Historical Background:

The history of Waukesha County and its settlement is well chronicled in *The History of Waukesha County Wisconsin* and *Memoirs of Waukesha County*. Agricultural development, which has been historically significant in the county, is discussed in these sources as well as in *Cultural Resource Management in Wisconsin* (Vol. 2). To summarize briefly, Waukesha County was created in 1846; however, permanent white settlement in the area began in 1834, with the arrival of Morris and Alonzo Cutler. As noted, the county's subsequent growth was mostly attributable to its agricultural prosperity, although Waukesha's mineral springs prompted a flourishing resort industry. Nevertheless, the impact of farming cannot be overemphasized. In fact, agriculture spurred much of the county's industrial development, including its role as a leading dairy producer in southeastern Wisconsin by the early twentieth century.¹⁰

It is within this largely agricultural context that the Waukesha County Town of Vernon evolved. Organized in 1839, Vernon was settled in 1836 by John Dodge, Prucius Putnam and brothers Curtis and Orrin Haseltine. Other settlers arrived in 1837 and joined in cultivating the fertile soil, as well as processing sugar and collecting firewood from the area's maple timber supply. By 1839, Vernon was the third largest wheat producing township in the county and the leader in sugar making. In 1841, Amos and Aaron Putnam were operating the town's first sawmill in the hamlet of Big Bend, and by 1852, E.H. Kellogg built Vernon Mills. Settlers were able to get their goods to Milwaukee--initially the only available market--via the Milwaukee and Janesville Plank Road, which

⁹Barbara Wyatt, ed., *Cultural Resource Management in Wisconsin*, 3 vols. (Madison: Historic Preservation Division, State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1986), Vol. 2, Architecture, 2-3; Virginia and Lee McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993), 179-82; John J.-G. Blumenson, *Identifying American Architecture: A Pictorial Guide to Styles and Terms, 1600-1945*, 2d ed. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1981), 27.

¹⁰*The History of Waukesha County Wisconsin* (Chicago: Western Historical Company, 1880), 347-48, 358; Theron W. Haight, ed., *Memoirs of Waukesha County* (Madison: Western Historical Association, 1907), 68-72, 213-14, 261-65; Wyatt, *Cultural Resource Management*, Vol. 2, Agriculture, 11-3/4.

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was built through the town in 1849. Throughout the second part of the nineteenth century, raising livestock and dairy farming became prevalent in Vernon, which reached a population of 1,307 by 1907. Today, Vernon remains a small, agriculturally-oriented community. It has the distinction, however, of being the only location in Wisconsin for the Reformed Presbyterian Church, a historically Scotch/Scotch-Irish denomination.¹¹

Religion:

Undoubtedly, the majority of Scotch/Scotch-Irish immigrants who began settling in Vernon during the 1840s were farmers. These pioneers were part of a sizable stream of Highlanders moving from upstate New York to Wisconsin. The flow began in 1840, when Neil McDougall, an elder in the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church of York Township, Livingston County, New York, purchased land in Section 12 of Vernon Township and Section 35 of Waukesha Township. Hoping to establish a new, Scottish colony, McDougall successfully encouraged many fellow Scots from York and Caledonia townships to relocate in Wisconsin. In addition, Scots from Canada and directly from Scotland immigrated to Vernon Township. As in most ethnic enclaves, the Church played a vital role in the formation of the community. Although the majority of these early Scottish pioneers belonged to the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church, other Presbyterian denominations were also represented, including the Reformed Presbyterian Church.¹²

The history of the Reformed Presbyterian Church dates back to sixteenth and seventeenth-century Scotland and the aftermath of the Protestant Reformation. After 1560--largely through the efforts of John Knox--the Church in Scotland became "Presbyterian in government and Reformed, or Calvinist, in doctrine." During the seventeenth century, Kings James I and Charles I of England tried to impose an episcopalian religion upon Scotland, resulting in near riots in 1637. The feud continued to simmer and encouraged Presbyterians to take part in the English Civil War. As a result, Presbyterians in Scotland and in the English Parliament signed the Solemn League and Covenant in 1643. Both parties agreed to preserve Presbyterianism in Scotland and to establish it in

¹¹History of Waukesha County, 455-57, 789-92; Haight, *Memoirs*, 339-4; Cynthia Dennis, "Service Is Step Back in Time," *Milwaukee Journal*, 22 October 1992, clipping in RPCV file, WCM.

¹²Edward C. Wicklein, *The Scots of Vernon and Adjacent Townships, Waukesha County, Wisconsin* (By the Author, 1974), 1, 3-4, 11; *History of Waukesha County*, 789.

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England and Ireland. Presbyterians enjoyed a brief measure of power at the time, but with the restoration of King Charles II in 1660, they again protested against the increasing episcopal nature of the Church. Consequently, English officials began persecuting these dissenters. After the Glorious Revolution of 1689, the new English monarch, William of Orange, engineered a compromise to quell the difficulties. The official religions in England and Scotland would be Episcopalianism and Presbyterianism, respectively. The agreement satisfied many Presbyterians, but a faction within the Church balked. This group recognized only Christ--not the King of England--as the head of the Church; secondly, the group claimed that the royal compromise violated the Solemn League and Covenant. Subsequently, this faction became known as the Reformed

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Presbyterians. The group not only insisted its members dissent against a government which violated the Covenant, but also stipulated that they must separate from a Church which countenanced such a government.¹³

The Reformed Presbyterians, or Covenanters, carried this tradition of political dissent with them when they began immigrating in large numbers to the American colonies in the eighteenth century. Pockets of Covenanters emerged in South Carolina, New York and, especially, Pennsylvania. The Reformed Presbyterians fought against England during the American Revolution, but they criticized the Constitution because it did not officially declare the U.S. a Christian nation. Consequently, the Covenanters refused to vote, accept American citizenship, run for public office or have anything to do with civil constitutions. In addition, Covenanters adopted strict behavioral codes. For example, members scorned the use of alcohol and tobacco and did not allow playing musical instruments in church. Psalms praising God were the only songs members were permitted to sing at services. Perhaps rigid adherence to doctrine and rules explains the rather sluggish growth of the Reformed Presbyterian Church in the nineteenth century. By 1832, there were roughly five thousand Covenanters in the U.S.; they had spread westward, reaching Illinois in 1820 and Wisconsin and Iowa in the 1840s. The Church lost nearly half of its members in 1833, when a faction decided to forego political dissent and accept mainstream society's beliefs. This group became known as the Reformed Presbyterian Church General Synod, while individuals who continued to adhere to political dissent were part of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America. The Church in Vernon was part of the latter.¹⁴

Arriving in 1844, William and Ann McLeod were the first Covenanters in Vernon Township. Similar to many Vernon settlers, most of the township's early Covenanters migrated from New York. The McLeods, for example, hailed from Rochester, while John McNeil and James

¹³Wicklein, *Scots of Vernon*, 12; David Melville Carson, "A History of the Reformed Presbyterian Church in America to 1871," (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1964), 1-6; Wyatt, *Cultural Resource Management in Wisconsin*, Vol. 3, Religion, 16-1; G.S. Plumley, *The Presbyterian Church Throughout the World: From the Earliest to the Present Times* (New York: DeWitt C. Lent and Company, 1874), 28-43; J.H.S. Burleigh, *A Church History of Scotland* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1960), 188-263.

¹⁴Wicklein, *Scots of Vernon*, 12; Carson, "Reformed Presbyterian Church in America to 1871," 15-20, 27-32, 48-53, 58-64, 66-70, 78-79, 93-104; Slattery, "'Dead' Church."

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Wright came from York. Shortly after arriving, Covenanters sought comfort through their faith. Nathaniel Allen, a licentiate, preached to the small congregation in a log schoolhouse. A few years later, Covenanters took steps toward a more formal organization. On 27 June 1847, Daniel McMillan, a Church elder from York, established the Reformed Presbyterian Society of Waukesha. The society was designated "Waukesha" because it met in James Wright's home, which was located in Waukesha Township. The following year, a commission of the Illinois Presbytery gathered at the Wright house and officially constituted the congregation on 18 October. Fourteen residents were admitted as charter members.¹⁵

Problems hampered the society in its first few years. Members were soon dissatisfied with their arrangement with the Illinois Presbytery because the latter was too far away and travel costs were exorbitant. Hoping to secure a "more steady supply of preaching," the congregation petitioned the Church Synod in April 1849. It asked to be placed under the care of the presbytery in Rochester, New York, since, at that time, traveling over the Great Lakes was cheaper than overland travel from the presbytery located in southern Illinois. The synod granted the congregation's wish. In June 1850, Samuel Bowden, pastor of the York Reformed Presbyterian Church, conducted services for the Waukesha congregation, which had grown to thirty-four members. Shortly thereafter, however, the congregation lost two elders as James McConnell moved away and James Wright died. As a result, the congregation was automatically dissolved on 18 November 1850 and reverted to a society.¹⁶

Despite this setback, society members continued to practice their faith actively. Indeed, it was at this time that the society initiated efforts to build a house of worship. By April 1852, the society had secured a plot of land for the proposed structure when Bailey Webster deeded a small tract in Vernon Township to the society. Moreover, members supplied money, material and manpower. In 1852, James Cummings pledged thirty-five days of work and five dollars for the project. Alexander McDonald furnished

¹⁵Wicklein, *Scots of Vernon*, 5, 19; W. Melancthon Glasgow, *History of the Reformed Presbyterian Church in America* (Baltimore: Hill & Harvey, 1888), 346-47; *History of Waukesha County*, 792; Session Minutes of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Vernon, in RPCV file, B1, C1, at WCM.

¹⁶Wicklein, *Scots of Vernon*, 19-20, 51; Glasgow, *Reformed Presbyterian Church*, 347; Session Minutes, C2-C3.

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nails, glass and five dollars; John McNeill and William Turner pledged to provide two thousand shingles apiece, and Thomas Faulkner worked on the doors and window sashes. The building--the only Covenanter Church in Wisconsin--was finished in 1854; it contained a double-door entrance and had a long porch along the entire front facade. Interior features included box stoves, a kerosene chandelier with cut-glass globes, two bracket lamps on each side of the pulpit and patterned carpeting. In addition, a cemetery and two horse sheds were adjacent.¹⁷

The completion of the church seemed to place the struggling society on a sounder foundation. Because members began to meet in Vernon Township, the society changed its name to Vernon in May 1854. Two years later, the Illinois Presbytery reorganized the congregation on 16 September. Once again, the congregation elected elders and admitted new members. The group actively sought a pastor for its new church but did not secure one until Robert Johnson accepted the post in 1859. A native of Antrim County, Ireland, Johnson served as pastor until 1867. For the next several years, licensed preachers conducted services until Robert Cannon became the second pastor in 1871. Prior to his service in Vernon, Cannon was pastor for congregations in Pennsylvania and Iowa. He remained in Vernon until he resigned in 1878. Isaiah Faris succeeded Cannon. Faris was an Indiana native and, similar to Cannon, worked in Iowa for several years. Faris enjoyed the longest pastorship in the Vernon Church, serving until 1901.¹⁸

Once Faris departed, the congregation fell upon hard times. Financial constraints made it difficult for the Church to obtain a full-time pastor. Instead, the congregation had to rely on "supply preachers." Dwindling numbers in the congregation added to the difficulties. Several families had moved out of the area, and many older settlers had passed away with no descendants. It also seems that dissension may have split the Church. In 1920, membership abruptly declined by half. Many Covenanters left to join other denominations, including the less strict United Presbyterian Church located down

¹⁷Wicklein, *Scots of Vernon*, 20; Glasgow, *Reformed Presbyterian Church*, 348; Session Minutes, C8, C12; Elizabeth Faulkner Nolan, "Lost Denomination," *Landmark* 1 (April 1958): 5; Libbie Nolan, "Of Psalms and Old Time Religion," *Landmark* 29 (Autumn 1986): 8-9; Dennis, "Service Is Step Back in Time;" "The Reformed Presbyterian Church of Vernon," Historical marker prepared by the Waukesha County Historical Society, 1958.

¹⁸Wicklein, *Scots of Vernon*, 20-21; Glasgow, *Reformed Presbyterian Church*, 348, 452-53, 499; *History of Waukesha County*, 792.

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the road. A Church trial was the apparent cause for the rift. Trials were a means for the congregation to judge members accused of violating any of the Church's moral tenets: Punishment could involve banishment from the Church.¹⁹ Specifics regarding the alleged divisive trial in 1920 are unknown.²⁰ It is known, however, that the Church never recovered after that date. Regular services were no longer held at the Vernon structure, and the frequency of services diminished until they were held only once a year. In the 1930s, the congregation was officially disbanded, and ownership of the property reverted to the main branch of the Reformed Presbyterian Church in Pennsylvania.²¹

Although the congregation was no longer active, Ivan Wright, great-grandson of James Wright, continued to maintain the small church. Indeed, he refurbished the kerosene chandelier and bracket lamps, turned over the worn carpeting and repaired the roof. Wright passed away in the late 1960s, but the church's restoration continued. The Vernon Reformed Presbyterian Cemetery Association assumed ownership from the Mother Church in Pittsburgh, and, in 1971, the twelve members of the association set about restoring the old structure. John Watson, a long-time Vernon resident and an elder in the nearby United Presbyterian Church, led the renovation effort. Under Watson's leadership, the cemetery association replaced the church roof, patched up plaster, cleaned the pews and woodwork, built a new wooden porch (see Section 7) and installed new wallpaper. In addition, the group restored a section of the old sheds behind the church and did some landscaping on the church and cemetery grounds. As the church was renewed, so too was the congregation. Beginning in 1971, annual services were held once again and continue to the present day. These services have attracted crowds as large as 150 and provide an opportunity not only to practice one's faith but also to connect with the community's

¹⁹Wicklein, *Scots of Vernon*, 21-23; Mary Baird, Secretary of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Vernon, Telephone conversation with Laura Abing, 10 April 1997; Wright, "Tales of an Old Vernon Church."

²⁰No specifics regarding the trial appear in any of the available records reviewed. In an effort to learn something about the event, we contacted Jim Watson and Church secretary, Mary Baird. Watson was not certain, but he thought that the trial may have stemmed from members who wanted to vote in political elections. Baird offered no explanation; she indicated that documents concerning the trial are extant but sealed. Watson, Telephone conversation with Abing; Baird, Telephone conversation with Abing.

²¹Wicklein, *Scots of Vernon*, 21-23.

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Reformed Presbyterian Church of Vernon
Vernon Township, Waukesha County, WI

historic past.²²

²²Wicklein, Scots of Vernon, 23; Nolan, "Heritage Revisited," 19-21; Nolan, "Of Psalms and Old Time Religion," 8-10; Charlotte R. Seybold, "125th Anniversary," Waukesha Freeman, 21 August 1973, 2, clipping in RPCV file, WCM; Dennis, "Service Is Step Back in Time"; Slattery, "'Dead' Church."

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Reformed Presbyterian Church of Vernon
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Architecture:

The gabled, clapboard Reformed Presbyterian Church of Vernon displays essential characteristics of the Greek Revival style. The main block presents rectangular massing and features wooden architrave trim with classical pilasters; the overall structure includes triple-hung, twelve-light windows, pilaster corner boards, deep gable returns, and a wide frieze. These Greek Revival elements are all present in the discussion of the style included in *Cultural Resource Management in Wisconsin (CRMP)*, the McAlester's *A Field Guide to American Houses*, and Blumenson's *Identifying American Architecture*.²³

In addition to being an excellent example of the Greek Revival, the church also fully retains its initial integrity of function, given its fine interior details. These include oak pews, a raised pulpit, patterned carpeting, wainscoting and kerosene lamp lighting. With regard to integrity of function, the *CRMP* specifically asserts that a schoolhouse, for instance, "should retain a high degree of integrity both inside and out to be eligible for the National Register." By a logical extension of this statement, and given the clear sense of historical function conveyed by the interior and exterior of the subject property, it is believed that the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Vernon is eligible for the National Register under Criterion C as an excellent example of the Greek Revival style adapted to ecclesiastical use.²⁴ In addition, the church also still retains its historic setting, which consists of the church cemetery, and which also contains a carriage shed and cemetery entrance gate. All of these resources date from within the period of significance and leave an impression of the church and its grounds as it appeared when the congregation disbanded in the 1930s.

Summary:

The Reformed Presbyterian Church of Vernon is a fine example of Greek Revival architecture that retains a high degree of both exterior and interior integrity. Intact

²³Wyatt, *Cultural Resource Management in Wisconsin*, Vol. 2, Architecture, 2-3; McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses*, 179-82; Blumenson, *Identifying American Architecture*, 27.

²⁴Wyatt, *Cultural Resource Management in Wisconsin*, Vol. 3, Education, 2-12.

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rural examples of such churches are already rare and are becoming rarer still as time passes. The Reformed Presbyterian Church of Vernon is therefore recommended as being eligible for the National Register under Criteria C because it is a fine example of an important and now endangered style in Wisconsin. It is also believed that this building is the only actual church building ever built by one of the Reformed Presbyterian congregations in Wisconsin but this remains to be proven.

Criteria Consideration A

It is believed that the criteria for satisfying Criteria Consideration A have been met because the Reformed Presbyterian Church is being nominated to the NRHP for its architectural significance as an excellent example of Greek Revival design.

Reformed Presbyterian Church of Vernon
Name of Property

Waukesha Co., WI
County and State

9. Major Bibliographical References

X See continuation sheets

Previous documentation of 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
Specify repository:
Waukesha County Museum

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 1.97 acres (.79 hectares)

UTM References:

A	<u>1/6</u>	<u>4/0/0/5/4/0</u>	<u>4/7/5/1/9/1/0</u>	B	<u>/</u>	<u>/ / / / /</u>	<u>/ / / / / / /</u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
C	<u>/</u>	<u>/ / / / /</u>	<u>/ / / / / / /</u>	D	<u>/</u>	<u>/ / / / /</u>	<u>/ / / / / / /</u>

 See Continuation Sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The area is largely a rectangle, 104.8 m (343.8 ft) by 76.2 m (250 ft), the long center axis of which is oriented on a north/south axis and parallel to Big Bend Road. The property is located in T5N R19E S11, Vernon Township, Waukesha County, Wisconsin. (See sketch map).

 See Continuation Sheet

Boundary Justification

This boundary includes all that area historically associated with the church.

 See Continuation Sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Traci Schnell, Laura Abing and Kevin Abing
organization HERITAGE RESEARCH, LTD. date 25 April 1997
street & number N89 W16785 Appleton Avenue telephone (414) 251-7792
city or town Menomonee Falls state WI zip code 53051

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____ See continuation sheet

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Reformed Presbyterian Church of Vernon
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REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF VERNON (Perspective view: church and cemetery)
W234 S7710 Big Bend Road
Town of Vernon, Waukesha County, WI
Photo by Traci E. Schnell
April 1997
Negative at SHSW
View to Northeast
Photo #1 of 14

REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF VERNON (Church)
W234 S7710 Big Bend Road
Town of Vernon, Waukesha County, WI
Photo by Traci E. Schnell
April 1997
Negative at SHSW
View to East Southeast
Photo #2 of 14

REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF VERNON (Church)
W234 S7710 Big Bend Road
Town of Vernon, Waukesha County, WI
Photo by Traci E. Schnell
April 1997
Negative at SHSW
View to Southeast
Photo #3 of 14

REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF VERNON (Church)
W234 S7710 Big Bend Road
Town of Vernon, Waukesha County, WI
Photo by Traci E. Schnell
April 1997
Negative at SHSW
View to Southwest
Photo #4 of 14

X See continuation sheet

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REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF VERNON (Church)
W234 S7710 Big Bend Road
Town of Vernon, Waukesha County, WI
Photo by Traci E. Schnell
April 1997
Negative at SHSW
View to Northwest
Photo #5 of 14

REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF VERNON (Church: west entrance detail)
W234 S7710 Big Bend Road
Town of Vernon, Waukesha County, WI
Photo by Traci E. Schnell
April 1997
Negative at SHSW
View to East
Photo #6 of 14

REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF VERNON (Interior view: pulpit from balcony)
W234 S7710 Big Bend Road
Town of Vernon, Waukesha County, WI
Photo by Traci E. Schnell
April 1997
Negative at SHSW
View to East Northeast
Photo #7 of 14

REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF VERNON (Interior view: stove)
W234 S7710 Big Bend Road
Town of Vernon, Waukesha County, WI
Photo by Traci E. Schnell
April 1997
Negative at SHSW
View to Southwest
Photo #8 of 14

X See continuation sheet

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REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF VERNON (Interior view: nave and balcony)
W234 S7710 Big Bend Road
Town of Vernon, Waukesha County, WI
Photo by Traci E. Schnell
April 1997
Negative at SHSW
View to Northwest
Photo #9 of 14

REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF VERNON (Interior view: vestry)
W234 S7710 Big Bend Road
Town of Vernon, Waukesha County, WI
Photo by Traci E. Schnell
April 1997
Negative at SHSW
View to Northwest
Photo #10 of 14

REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF VERNON (Carriage shed)
W234 S7710 Big Bend Road
Town of Vernon, Waukesha County, WI
Photo by Traci E. Schnell
April 1997
Negative at SHSW
View to Northeast
Photo #11 of 14

REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF VERNON (Carriage shed construction detail)
W234 S7710 Big Bend Road
Town of Vernon, Waukesha County, WI
Photo by Traci E. Schnell
April 1997
Negative at SHSW
View to North
Photo #12 of 14

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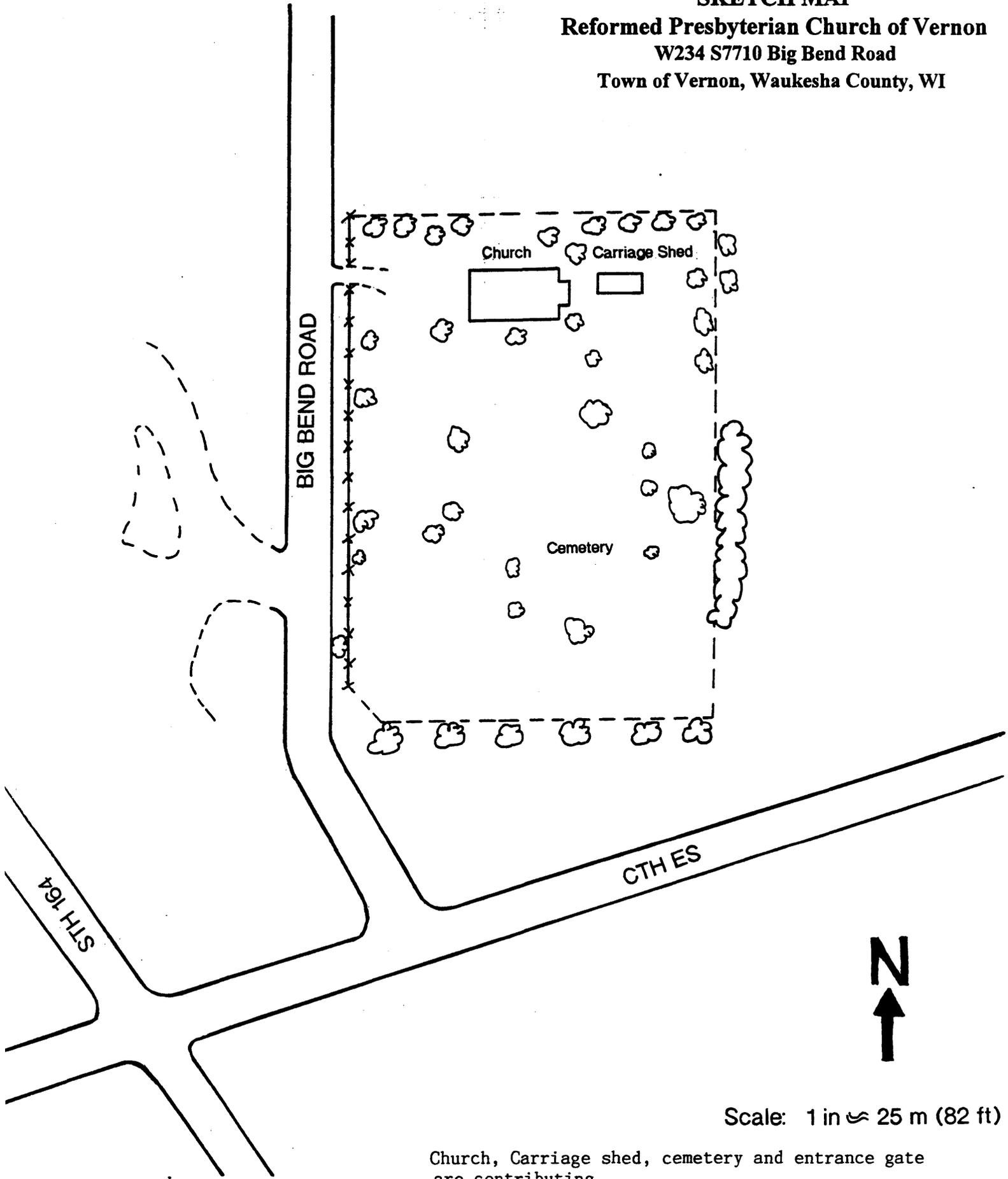
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Vernon Township, Waukesha County, WI

REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF VERNON (Historic photograph: church)
W234 S7710 Big Bend Road
Town of Vernon, Waukesha County, WI
Photo from Waukesha County Museum Collections
1961
Negative at SHSW
*(photograph and negative not to be used without specific consent of the Waukesha County
Museum)*
View to East Southeast
Photo #13 of 14

REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF VERNON (Historic photograph: carriage shed)
W234 S7710 Big Bend Road
Town of Vernon, Waukesha County, WI
Photo from Waukesha County Museum Collections
1960
Negative at SHSW
*(photograph and negative not to be used without specific consent of the Waukesha County
Museum)*
View to Northeast
Photo #14 of 14

SKETCH MAP
Reformed Presbyterian Church of Vernon
W234 S7710 Big Bend Road
Town of Vernon, Waukesha County, WI



Scale: 1 in \approx 25 m (82 ft)

Church, Carriage shed, cemetery and entrance gate
are contributing