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#### Architecture.

The Locktown Baptist Church is a fine example of early Nineteenth Century rural church building. The building, inside and out, has never had any more than minor changes. The floors, pews, pulpit, altar, balconies (gelleries), stairways, windows, and doors are all original. The only changes that have occurred in the churches one hundred and fifty year plus history was the installation of electricity and the closing up of the fireplace between the two entrance doorways.

The church exhibits a simple elegence quite typical of rural Hunterdon County. The quiet country setting of the church further enhances its architectural quality.

### Religion/Philosophy.

The Locktown Beptist Church was originally a mission church of the Baptistown Congregation, which was organized in 1745. The Locktown Church was organized and built in 1819.

The first minister of the church, Reverend David Beteman. died in 1832 and was buried benesth the church.



SEE INSTRUCTIONS

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## UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET REQUESTED ACTION: ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION PROPERTY Locktown Baptist Church NAME : MULTIPLE NAME: STATE & COUNTY: NEW JERSEY, Hunterdon 1/23/97 DATE RECEIVED: DATE OF PENDING LIST: DATE OF 16TH DAY: DATE OF 45TH DAY: 3/09/97 DATE OF WEEKLY LIST: REFERENCE NUMBER: 74001166 NOMINATOR: STATE REASONS FOR REVIEW: APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: Ν N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: OTHER: N PDIL: Ν N SLR DRAFT: N NATIONAL: REQUEST: N SAMPLE: Ν COMMENT WAIVER: Ν REJECT 20/2.97 DATE RETURN ACCEPT ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS: Additional Documentation Accepted

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# THE OLD SCHOOL BAPTIST CHURCH OF LOCKTOWN

by Marfy Goodspeed, 1996

This handsome stone church is located on the Locktown-Sergeantsville Road just south of the Wickecheoke Creek (block 8 lot 1). It was built in 1819 as a second church for the Kingwood Baptist Congregation which had been organized in Baptistown on July 27, 1745. The church in Locktown was called "the Lower Church" to distinguish it from the church in Baptistown. James P. Snell wrote that there were three churches in Locktown, the first built in 1750 of logs, 30 by 38 feet on a lot donated by George Burket. The second church was a frame building, and the third, the one standing today, was built of stuccoed stone. The locations of the two earlier churches are not exactly known, but it has been written that they were near to the existing church. 18th century road records refer to the earlier church as "The Swamp Meeting House."

Reference to the church was found in the minutes kept by the Kingwood Baptist Church. On January 1, 1819, it was agreed "to build a new meetinghouse in the lower part of the Congregation near M. Wm Dilses." On January 24th, they met "at the Schoolhouse near Wm Dilses to consult upon measures best to proceed in building a new meeting house." On April 10th they met again at the Schoolhouse, chose trustees and accepted from Daniel Rittenhouse a deed of conveyance for the meeting house ground and burying ground in the name of the trustees of the Kingwood Baptist Church. The lease was dated May 29, 1819. On October 16, 1819, the Baptists "met at the new meeting house."

Daniel Rittenhouse was owner of the tavern immediately adjacent to the church lot. The "burying ground" could not be located adjacent to the church because of the already existing tavern lot, so it was located on the other side of the tavern lot. The construction of the church was overseen by Daniel Rittenhouse's first cousin, Elisha Rittenhouse. The church building is one of the classic examples of rural architecture of the Federal period in Hunterdon County. The first pastor in the new, stone church, Elder David Bateman, is buried beneath the church floor; the marble communion table records that he died in 1832.

The Baptists of Hunterdon County in the 18th and early 19th century believed in pre-ordained selection, which obviated any need for evangelization or mission work. This became an issue of great moment in 1839, when many of the congregants followed the lead of Elder James Wigg, who advocated a more missionary approach. Wigg was inspired by the "Second Great Awakening" that had swept the country in the 1830's, inspiring evangelical Protestantism, especially among Baptists and Methodists. These were "Antinomiuns," who claimed to have been visited by God with "New Light," during intense experience of adult conversion, or being "born again." United States Department of the Interior National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

(ADDENDUM)
Section number \_\_\_\_\_8 Page \_\_\_\_

Locktown Baptist Church, Delaware Township, Hunterdon County, New Jersey

The dispute reached a crisis when the adherents of the Old School philosophy locked Wigg and his followers out of the church. Apparently the 'new schoolers' added a second lock of their own. This was of great interest to Benjamin Hyde, the tavernkeeper next door. He had a sign made up for his tavern featuring the two locks plus a third, added for aesthetic reasons. The tavern sign is thought to have given the hamlet its name. Unfortunately, the sign and the locks have disappeared.

As to the Baptists, the schism could not be healed, and the new schoolers went their own way. Their congregation has survived in Baptistown, while the Old Schoolers, refusing to reach out for new members, dwindled; in 1880 Snell wrote that there were only 71 congregants and the property was valued at \$5,000. By 1960, they had all gone and Howard Johnson, the remaining trustee, "locked the door with sadness forever" in 1967.

The property was taken over by the New Jersey Baptist Convention of East Orange, New Jersey, and occasional meetings were held there. In the early 1970's, township residents made repairs to the building, removed the stucco and put the church on the National Register of Historic Places. In 1985, the Baptist Convention decided to put the church up for sale. It was purchased by Robert Hughes of Flemington, who intended to convert the building to a residence. But a group of concerned residents organized themselves as "The Friends of the Locktown Stone Church," and enlisted the support of Donald Jones, who purchased the church from Mr. Hughes in 1988. With the help of a Green Acres loan, the Township purchased the church from Mr. Jones and then leased it to the Friends for twenty years with the understanding that the Friends would restore it for public use.

### SOURCES OF INFORMATION:

Minutes of the Kingwood Baptist Church, Vol.I, 1742-1824.

- James P. Snell, *History of Hunterdon and Somerset Counties*, Philadelphia, 1881, page 378.
- J.M. Hoppock, "Old School Baptist Church at Locktown," Democrat-Advertiser, January 4, 1906.
- Clinton B. Wilson, "The Old Locktown Baptist Church," Lambertville Beacon, c. 1970.

William Rittenhouse, unpublished recollections, 1988.

ADDENDUM - - Section 8, Page 3

### LOCKTOWN STONE CHURCH

## HISTORIC STRUCTURES REPORT

April 1989

Prepared for: Friends of the Locktown Stone Church, Inc. RD 3, Box 796 Stockton, New Jersey

Prepared by: Bertland Associates Box 11 Port Murray, New Jersey

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### ARCHITECTURAL DEVELOPMENT

Although the development history of Locktown Stone Church can be generally understood through analysis of its physical fabric, the 19th-century church minutes provide a wealth of information about repairs and modifications made to the building and its site throughout the period and, in some cases, about details and features that have not survived. Much of the work ordered by the trustees of the church appears to have been periodic repairs necessitated by deteriorated conditions; alterations also were made in reponse to changing technologies and in an attempt to improve the security and appearance of the property and the comfort and convenience of its users. While questions such as the character of the original altar and the date of its replacement remain unanswered, a fairly clear picture of the church's architectural history has emerged from careful examination of the building, coupled with study of the church minutes and other historical sources.

Built in 1819, Locktown Stone Church is picturesquely sited in a stone-walled yard shaded by several large old trees at the northern edge of the village to which it gave name. Although its location was dictated by the distribution of the Kingwood Baptist congregation and by the gift of a half-acre building lot, the placement of the church to face south instead of the road reflects the traditional southern orientation preference that prevailed throughout the rural region for both public and private buildings into the middle decades of the 19th century.

In most aspects of its construction and detailing the church is a product of vernacular building traditions. It is of traditional load-bearing masonry construction, utilizing locally availible materials, and incorporates a post-and-beam truss system in the open interior to support the roof and balcony. Its rubble-stone walls are bedded with a clay mortar and originally were stuccoed to prevent moisture intrusion, as was commonly the practice in the Traditional mortice-and-tenon joinery was used to construct area. the well-built frames of the roof and the balcony's floor and seating platform; the first floor is more crudely framed with buttjoined top-hewn log joists. Interior and exterior features such as the simple window surrounds, random-width flooring, white-washed plaster walls, and beaded chair rail and baseboard are finishes typical of the average early 19th-century farmhouse. The unpainted gallery seats differ little from a simple bench or settle, and the pews below are embellished with little more than paint and quirk bead-edged panels on the aisle ends.

For other aspects of the building's design, one must look to classical architectural sources which reached America from England in the 18th century and which were subsequently transmitted by example and pattern book from sophisticated urban centers to the hinterlands. For its basic form, as well as certain decorative details, the builders of Locktown Stone Church clearly were influenced by classical architectural sources.

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Locktown Stone Church exemplies the church type which appeared in the region in the late 18th century and remained popular until the middle of the 19th century. The type is characterizeed by a symmetrical rectangular form, gable-end principal facade with one or two entries, and a regular fenestration pattern. While a belfry occasionally crowns the front gable, the steepleless version (of which Locktown is an example) is more common. The roots of the type undoubtedly lie in the classically inspired designs of English architects Christopher Wren and James Gibbs which began influencing the church architecture of English America before the middle of the 18th century. From the evidence of the very few surviving examples and documentary sources, the region's earliest churches were of a meetinghouse type, essentially domestic in scale, with the entry not in the gable end, but in one of the long walls. A transitional phase between the two types is suggested by one 18th-century area church with both gable-end and side-wall entries, but by the early 1800s gable-fronted churches were proliferating throughout the region. In the later 19th century, however, the gable-fronted type disappeared from the local building vocabulary, supplanted by churches of a variety of Victorian revival-style designs.

While some examples of the gable-fronted church type are quite unadorned, most are embellished, with varying degrees of sophistication, with detailing derived from one or more of the classically based architectural styles popular during the first half of the 19th century. At Locktown Stone Church the most notable exterior feature is the paired front entries whose pedimented form has 18thcentury Georgian antecedents, but whose detailing, incorporating reeded panels and moldings and diamond-shaped lozenges, is characteristic of the more delicate Federal style popular in the early Reeded paneling appears again on the enclosed railing of 1800s. the U-shaped balcony. While the exuberantly detailed entries may be said to typify the freedom with which local craftsman interpreted classical motifs; the proportions and detailing of the balcony's columns probably reflect a lack of understanding and skill. Although the design of the balcony columns clearly is based on the Tuscan column, the classical principal of entassis (the intentional slight convex curving of the vertical profile of a tapered column to overcome the optical illusion of concavity that characterizes sraight-sided columns) was not understood by their maker who also greatly modified the proportions and details of the Tuscan order's capital and base.

The original altar was no doubt an architectural, as well as the religious focal point of the church. Nothing is known about its design other than the outline left in the plaster of the north wall and what may have been one of its staircase stringers, recyled in constructing the present altar, on which a paint ghost suggests a heavily lobed applied ornament. Physical and stylistic evidence date the present altar to the late 19th or possibly early 20th century; howewer, the treatment of its central lectern and flanking pedestals reveals classical influences. Unfortunately, the church minutes make no reference to its installation.

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Other than an 1830 order for hinges (Church minutes, Vol. II 8/28/30 entry), the earliest record of repairs to the fabric of the church comes from two 1848 entries in the church minutes noting agreement to repair the outside of the building (7/29/48) and to open a subscription to provide the necessary funds (10/28/48). In the 1860s and early 1870s, repairs evidently were made to the windows and doors, including the repair of the north window and the rehinging of broken shutters (11/30/61, 8/25/66, 2/24/72, and A major program of repair occurred in the mid-1870s. 8/31/72). Ιn 1873, the trustees appointed a committee to arrange the work and raise money, giving first priority to a new roof (2/22/73). The work apparently was done within one year, since the accounts were settled and the bills paid early in 1874 (2/28/74 and 5/30/74).

That the new roof was tin is suggested by a February 1874 directive to have the roof painted, and in fact, in late 1886, it was "thought necessary to have the tin roof painted," the bill for which was presented in August of the following year (11/27/86 and 8/27/87). The present roof may be this roof; otherwise, the roof installed in the 1870s would have had to have been removed and replaced by the wood shingles which underlie the present metal cladding. The roof, no doubt, was originally covered with wood shingles.

Over the course of the 19th century the building's heating and lighting were periodically upgraded. In 1830, a member of the congregation was appointed "to get and install some lights," presumably oil lamps of some type (7/28/30). Lamps were again ordered in 1870 and paid for in the following year (11/23/70 and 2/25/71): they probably were kerosene lamps, in general use by that time. How long the congregation made use of the fireplace, which could never have provided sufficient heat to warm the building, is unknown. A stove may have been installed as early as 1820, when building superintendent Elisha Rittenhouse reported that one could be obtained for the meetinghouse (1/1/20). Wood stoves evidently were in use well before 1850; at the October meeting of that year. it was agreed to order a cord of wood for the stone meetinghouse and the committee investigating the purchase of coal stoves reported that they had not done so since they had not yet sold the old stoves (10/26/50). Thereafter, the minutes make repeated reference to the repair and purchase of stoves and stove pipes. In 1873, it was agreed to move the coal stoves

> from their present positions in the center of the house and put them on the outside of the isles (sic) taking out a sufficient number of seats for that purpose (11/29/73).

This was not done until 1875, when two new stoves were purchased to replace the worn-out old stoves (2/27/75). The stoves evidently were again replaced in 1894 (12/22/94). The present coal stove dates to the 20th century.

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As noted above, pews were moved in 1875 to allow for the repositioning of the stoves. In 1871, alterations to the pews were made "to make it more convenient getting in and out on funeral occasions" (2/25/71). The trustees agreed to buy 70 feet of new carpeting for the aisles and front of the altar in 1884, and the following year agreed to carpet the floor between the seats and around the stoves (5/9/84 and 8/29/85). What this carpet or its predecessor looked like is unknown; however, the ingrain carpet fragment on the altar footstool may be from the 19th-century carpeting used in the church. The present aisle carpeting is a 20thcentury replacement.

In addition to the tin roof, both the exterior trim and interior finishes apparently were painted in the later 19th century. The female members of the congregation were asked in 1872 to undertake raising money to have the church "painted inside and whitewashed" (2/24/72). It is not known whether or not the "sisters" were successful in this endeavor. In 1887, it was agreed to paint all of the exterior trim, and two years later a bill was presented for the materials and labor for the work (8/27/87 and 5/18/89). Among the materials purchased were 50 pounds of white zinc, 2 pounds of umber, and 12 pounds of green paint; the trim probably was painted white and the shutters green.

In the 20th-century relatively little was done to the church other than minor repairs. Major exceptions are the shortening and rebuilding of the north window and the removal of stucco from the exterior walls and their repointing with portland cement, work done in the 1970s.

Repairs and improvements were also made to the church grounds over the course of the 19th century. In 1860, the trustees agreed to rebuild the wall on the south and west sides of the church (8/25/60); it presumably had been constructed some years earlier and may well be the present wall. A lock was ordered for the yard gates in 1874 (8/29/74). The wall was repaired again in 1881, and in 1893 it was decided "to have the yard fence re-roofed where it needs it" and to repair or replace the gate (11/26/81 and 9/30/93)." The re-roofing presumably referred to a raked wooden capping, like that at Mount Pleasant Cemetery in nearby Alexandria Township. A double-leaf picket gate hung on strap hinges is visible at the front entrance to the churchyard in a 1960s photograph of the church. The present concrete capping is a 20th-century alteration. Hitching posts and rails were installed or repaired in 1857, 1880, 1887, and in 1894 when it was resolved to get "new posts and iron rods" to replace the old decayed "tying places on the east side of the yard" (3/7/57, 2/28/80, 8/27/87, and 5/19/94). "A couple of backhouses," presumably privies, were ordered built in 1869 (5/15/69).

The most prominent improvement of the church property was the construction of the wagon sheds which evidently stood to the north of the church along the west property line. While it was first

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resolved that members of the congregation could build wagon sheds at their own expense in 1851 (1/25/51), little if any construction appears to have occurred until 1869-70. It was again resolved in 1865 that members could build sheds; in 1869, rules were adopted regulating the construction of sheds and a committee appointed to specify their materials and location (2/25/65 and 2/27/69). Two rows of sheds were built, and in 1870, the space between the rows was ordered boarded-up (11/23/70). The sheds were repaired in 1876 and whitewashed in 1877 (11/25/76 and 8/25/77). After the west row of sheds blew down in 1893, a committee was appointed to arrange for their reconstruction (9/30/93). Problems with unauthorized use of the sheds by non-church members, led to a directive ordering the sexton to have the sheds cleared and a gate installed to close the yard (5/19/94). The shed-rebuilding committee reported the completion of its work in 1894, noting that fourteen stalls had been constructed and sold. A photograph taken in the 1960s of the back of the church includes a corner of the what appears to the end of the row of wagon sheds along the west side of the rear yard. The structure depicted had a shed roof and vertical board siding.