

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR NPS USE ONLY
RECEIVED SEP 26 1979
DATE ENTERED NOV 30 1979

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC

AND/OR COMMON

Old Brick Church

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

Town Highway 18, 0.05 mile north of its intersection with NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN Vermont Route 35

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Athens

 VICINITY OF

Vermont

STATE

CODE

COUNTY

CODE

Vermont

50

Windham

025

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

OWNERSHIP

STATUS

PRESENT USE

DISTRICT

PUBLIC

OCCUPIED

AGRICULTURE

MUSEUM

BUILDING(S)

PRIVATE

UNOCCUPIED

COMMERCIAL

PARK

STRUCTURE

BOTH

WORK IN PROGRESS

EDUCATIONAL

PRIVATE RESIDENCE

SITE

PUBLIC ACQUISITION

ACCESSIBLE

ENTERTAINMENT

RELIGIOUS

OBJECT

IN PROCESS

YES: RESTRICTED

GOVERNMENT

SCIENTIFIC

BEING CONSIDERED

YES: UNRESTRICTED

INDUSTRIAL

TRANSPORTATION

NO

MILITARY

OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Town of Athens

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Athens

 VICINITY OF

STATE

Vermont

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,

REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Office of the Town Clerk

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Athens

STATE

Vermont

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

Vermont Historic Sites and Structures Survey

DATE

1974

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR

SURVEY RECORDS

Vermont Division for Historic Preservation

CITY, TOWN

Montpelier

STATE

Vermont

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Old Brick Church in Athens, Vermont stands on a gently sloping hillside a short distance north of a five-corner intersection between Vermont Route 35 and Town Highways 11, 12 and 18. A scattered settlement of houses formerly referred to as "Middletown" occupies the vicinity of the church. Set at the uphill (north) end of its rectangular lot, the church is oriented parallel to Town Highway 18 and overlooks the valley to the south. Low stone walls bound the north and east sides of the open grassy church yard next to the adjoining woods, while a row of large maple trees shelters the yard from the narrow gravel town road.

Built on a rectangular plan of 39 feet by 58 feet, the Old Brick Church rises two-and-one-half stories above its rubblestone foundation, incorporating both brick and wood framing in its shell. The three public elevations (exposed to the church yard on the west, south, and east) are constructed of brick laid in Flemish bond; the rear (north) elevation (next to the lot line and woods) is wood-framed and sheathed with clapboards now painted red. The gable roof is shingled with slate, and an interior brick chimney with a pointed-arch cap raises through the ridge near its north end.

The three-bay main (south) elevation of the church is dominated by a truncated central tower that projects almost its full depth outward from the facade. Each bay of the first story is occupied by a semi-elliptical-arched doorway; a fanlight distinguishes the unused tower doorway (also lighted by a 20-pane window in the door itself) from the side doorways with their blind transoms and paneled doors. On the second story, twelve-over-twelve sash windows with splayed brick lintels and wood sills are aligned above the doorways. The wood cornice return of the pediment encircles the tower; above the cornice return, both the gable and the tower are wood-framed and clapboarded. The third story of the tower, lighted by a single twelve-over-twelve sash window, rises slightly above the main roof-line and is capped by a gable roof oriented parallel to the main roof.

The six-bay side (east and west) elevations of the church display symmetrically arranged fenestration matching the windows on the main facade. On the rear elevation, a round-headed window with intersecting tracery is centered in the second story while two corner windows punctuate the first story.

The exterior of the Old Brick Church remains in its original appearance except for the top of the tower. Originally the tower rose to an extended third story capped by a flat roof with a prominent cornice; the perimeter of the roof was defined by corner pinnacles and connecting honeycomb-pattern balustrades. It is not known when or why the tower was altered to its present state.

The interior of the church has been altered (probably circa 1860) by the horizontal subdivision of the original hall into two separate floors. The original high pulpit, box pews, and galleries have been removed, probably at the time of the spatial alteration. The upper floor was used for town meetings until the 1970's; the main floor retains religious furnishings but has not been used for services since 1945.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW				
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> RELIGION	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)	
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION			

SPECIFIC DATES 1817

BUILDER/ARCHITECT Unknown

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Old Brick Church in Athens, Vermont represents the architectural transition from the eighteenth century New England meetinghouse to the nineteenth century church. The overall design and layout of the church constitutes a vernacular interpretation of traditional church form while the original furnishings (now removed) were derived from the New England meetinghouse. Built in a rural hamlet during an era when most Vermont churches were constructed of wood, the material of the Old Brick Church reflects its stature as the hub of a Methodist preacher circuit that extended through twelve towns in three Vermont counties. The church now ranks among the few major nineteenth century buildings in Vermont that have not been altered by the installation of electricity and other mechanical services.

The Methodist Society in Athens was founded in 1801, followed soon by the development of a circuit traveled by a preacher to serve the surrounding communities. By 1812, the Athens Circuit comprised twelve towns: Athens, Grafton, Rockingham, Putney, Townshend, Londonderry, Landgrove, Weston, Windham, Chester, Springfield, and Mount Holly. Services were generally held in private houses, barns, or even outdoors.

Meanwhile, the population of Athens increased to several hundred, and in 1817 the need for a permanent place of worship culminated in the construction of the brick church on the hillside in "Middletown." The church was furnished with the high pulpit, box pews, and large galleries characteristic of the New England meetinghouse but those elements were arranged on the long axis in the manner of the traditional Anglican church, whose form by then had superseded the meetinghouse in New England religious architecture. By 1820, church records reveal that 114 residents of Athens were enrolled in membership. Quarterly Conferences were held at the church and attracted as many as 500 participants from the circuit towns.

Subsequent development in Athens favored the valley to the east where the hamlet of Athens emerged to rival the Middletown settlement. In 1859, a new Methodist church (called the "White Church") was built in the valley and religious use of the Old Brick Church began to decline. Probably during this period, the interior of the church was altered to provide a second-floor meeting hall for town assemblies, and the high pulpit, box pews, and galleries were removed. Religious services were eventually discontinued except for special celebrations in the summer.

In 1924, the Old Brick Meeting House Association was organized for the purpose of repairing and preserving the building. The group succeeded in refurbishing the first floor by 1931; however, fifteen years later the summer services ended. Ownership of the Old Brick Church remained uncertain until the Town of Athens took formal possession in 1951. Town meetings continued in the upper floor until shifted to a modern building in the middle 1970's.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Wyman, Lora M. History of Athens Vermont. Ann Arbor, Michigan: Edwards Brothers, Inc. c. 1960.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

UTM NOT VERIFIED

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY less than one acre

UTM REFERENCES

A	1,8	6,9,7,0,0,0	4,7,7,7,1,0,0	B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C				D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The Old Brick Church occupies a rectangular lot of approximately 130 feet by 193 feet that abuts the east side of Town Highway 18. The longer dimension of the lot runs generally north-south, and the north and east boundaries of the property are marked by low fieldstone walls.

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Hugh H. Henry

ORGANIZATION

Vermont Division for Historic Preservation

STREET & NUMBER

Pavilion Building

CITY OR TOWN

Montpelier

DATE

May 23, 1979

TELEPHONE

802-828-3226

STATE

Vermont

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE

LOCAL

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

William B. Pinney

TITLE Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE

9-18-79

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

Carol A. Shall

DATE

11-30-79

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

ATTEST:

Bruce ...

DATE

11/29/79

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

FHR-8-300A
(11/78)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
HERITAGE CONSERVATION AND RECREATION SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR HCRS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	SEP 28 1979
DATE ENTERED	NOV 30 1979

CONTINUATION SHEET 1

ITEM NUMBER 8

PAGE 2

Currently (1979) the Old Brick Church is maintained in good condition. Although it has lost some original features, the building possesses enough of its original fabric to retain its architectural significance. The natural setting of the church also shows little disturbance or mechanical intrusion. This blend of architectural and environmental integrity enables the Old Brick Church to evoke to an extraordinary extent its early nineteenth century character and its associations with the early development and social history of the area.

The property being nominated to the National Register consists of the Old Brick Church and its original churchyard of approximately one acre.