

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

**DRAFT**

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 North Harpersfield Churches

other names/site number Methodist Episcopal Church; Free Church

name of related multiple property listing N/A

## Location

street & number 4289 and 4298 County Road 29  not for publication

city or town Jefferson  vicinity

state New York code NY county Delaware code 025 zip code 12093

## 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

    national     statewide X local

\_\_\_\_\_  
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:) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

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**5. Classification**

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

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

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

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	private
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - Local
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - State
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - Federal

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	building(s)
<input type="checkbox"/>	district
<input type="checkbox"/>	site
<input type="checkbox"/>	structure
<input type="checkbox"/>	object

Contributing	Noncontributing	
3		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
3	0	<b>Total</b>

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

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

N/A

N/A

**6. Function or Use**

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

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

RELIGION/religious facility

DOMESTIC/single dwelling

SOCIAL/meeting hall

**7. Description**

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

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

MID-19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY/Gothic Revival

foundation: Stone, concrete block

MID-19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY/Greek Revival

walls: Wood/clapboard

LATE 19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY/Victorian

roof: Asphalt shingle

other:

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**Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance of the property. Explain contributing and noncontributing resources if necessary. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, setting, size, and significant features.)

**Summary Paragraph**

The North Harpersfield Churches are located at 4289 and 4298 Sturges Corner-Schoharie County Line Road (County Route 29) in the hamlet of North Harpersfield in Delaware County, New York. The nomination comprises three related buildings: The Methodist Episcopal Church, built in 1857 along the south side of Route 29, a Greek Revival church, modified with Victorian decorative elements; the Free Church, also built in 1857 and located almost directly across the road on the north side of Route 29, a Gothic Revival style church; and a carriage barn, located towards the northeast corner of the Free Church property, built ca. 1875.

The buildings are set in the rural landscape of Delaware County, surrounded by open grass and farmland, trees, and rolling wooded hills. Surrounding development is limited and includes single-family homes and agricultural structures. The churches are distinguished from surrounding properties by their ecclesiastical nature and design. The overall character of the buildings is that of isolated rural churches serving a dispersed community, though this has been altered by the conversion of the Methodist Episcopal Church into a residence and of the Free Church into a community hall, as well as the disuse of the carriage barn. The spatial relationship of the buildings changed with the moving of the carriage barn from the south to the north side of the road in 1921, but being directly across the road from its original location and similarly sited in reference to a church allows it to still convey its historical function and association as an interrelated element of the group of buildings.

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**Narrative Description**

**Methodist Episcopal Church:**

The Methodist Episcopal Church was built in 1857 as a standalone wood-framed structure on a stone foundation. The church was built with a rectangular plan with three bays and has a gable roof with a shallow pitch. The main entrance at the time of construction was likely centered on the north elevation, which faces what is now County Route 29. The church had some Greek Revival elements, including its roof form, Doric pilasters at its rear corners, and window casings. Two subsequent alteration campaigns changed both the design and the style of the church. In 1879, the roof was rebuilt with a steeper pitch using many of the existing common rafters with new boards attached to extend them (an original king post with its struts and principal rafters remains unused in situ). In 1900, the front end of the church was extended ten feet to add a fourth bay, a tower was added at the northeast corner, and the main entrance was moved to a door in the base of the tower's north face. In 1960, a drive and basement were excavated at the northern end of the building and a secondary basement entrance was located at street level at the northwest corner. The original fieldstone foundation was replaced with a concrete block foundation at this time (though a small portion of the fieldstone remains in the center of the north elevation).

The church sits back from the road about twenty feet, with a steep embankment rising about three feet from the road up to the lawn surrounding the church. A gravel drive cut into the slope leads to the street-level basement entrance, and a wide concrete staircase and path extend from the road to the main entrance. A white picket fence sits back from the road at the top of the embankment, extending from the drive eastward to the edge of the property. Several mature trees along the fence block the direct view of the church from the road.

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*Church Exterior*

On the façade (north), the walls of the main building and the tower are faced with wood clapboard siding from a water table board up to the level of the eave return, where there is a frieze board with lancet arch trim running across the base of the gable. There are wood corner boards at the edges of the tower and the main building. A heavy classical entablature runs along the gable rakes and under the eave return. From the level of the frieze board upwards, the gable and tower (on the north, east, and west elevations) are faced with alternating triple rows of square and fish scale wood shingles. The south side of the tower above the roofline is faced with clapboard. The top portion of the tower is open with eight wood posts and brackets supporting a pyramidal asphalt shingle roof. Small wood corbels line the overhanging eaves. The ceiling of the tower has wood boards and a hatch to provide access to the tower attic.

The main entrance to the church is a wood door with a single large glass pane covering the upper three-fourths. Two narrow sidelights flank the door extending from the top of the frame down to about the midpoint of the door, and beneath them are molded panels. A decorative pointed-arch stained-glass window surmounts the doorframe and contains the words "BUILT 1857 REMODELED 1879 ENLARGED 1900." A wood-framed fixed-glass Palladian window is located beneath the front gable, offset to the right. A small ocular fixed-glass window is located above the central arch of the Palladian window. The Palladian and ocular windows originally had stained glass per a ca.1910 photograph, but they now have clear and frosted glass, respectively. On the east side of the tower, an ocular window sits at second-story height. At the third-story level, on the north and south of the tower are rectangular single-pane fixed windows, while on the east there is a single-pane hopper window (all added in the 1980s).

The east elevation consists of four bays with wood clapboard siding, a heavy classical entablature, and a Doric pilaster at the south corner. The fact that the entablature slightly overhangs the casings of the windows and continues along the gable rakes of the north elevation suggests that it was a later addition, probably contemporaneous with the 1900 expansion. The fenestration consists of tall, four-over-six wood sash windows in the second and fourth bays; a short two-pane casement window above a tall two-pane casement window in the first bay, which still has the original casing, partially infilled to accommodate the two separate non-historic windows (modified ca. 2004); and a four-pane wood sash window above a non-historic glass door and screen door in the third bay. A wood deck spans the whole length of the east elevation. The deck and the door in the third bay were added in the 1980s. The roof has asphalt shingles, and a metal gutter is attached at the base of the roof slope.

The south elevation is faced with wood clapboard and has Doric pilasters at its corners. There is a wood frieze board along the gable rakes which is simpler and smaller than the entablature found on the other three elevations; it is likely that this dates to the 1879 roof reconfiguration and that it continued around the whole building before the 1900 alterations. The heavy entablature from the east and west elevations continues beneath the eave returns. A three-sided apse is located beneath the peak of the gable, projecting outwards about two feet above ground level and rising half the height of the rear elevation. It has a gently sloped roof covered with asphalt shingles. The two side faces each have a small rectangular window topped by a pointed-arch fixed-glass window. On the primary face, a small ocular window matching those elsewhere on the building sits near the apse's roofline. A concrete block chimney, added in 1960, runs upwards along the left side of the apse and extends several feet beyond the roofline of the church. Painted steel cellar hatch doors cover stairs to the basement to the right of the apse at ground level.

The west elevation has four bays, wood clapboard, and an entablature that match those of the east elevation. It also has a Doric pilaster at its south corner, though the north corner has a simple corner board. The concrete

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block foundation wall, surmounted by a wood water table board, is partially exposed and contains two small windows. Of the four bays of the west elevation, the second and fourth have four-over-six sash windows, as on the east side. The third bay has the same window type, except that the bottom two panes have been modified to open as a hopper window. The first bay has the same modified double casement windows with siding infill in the original casing as is found on the east side, and it was also modified from its original form ca. 2004.

*Church Interior*

The interior floorplan of the church as originally built adhered to the typical Greek Revival meeting house plan, consisting of a narthex at the entrance and a large open auditorium space containing a nave with pews facing a raised chancel platform at the end. When the front of the church was extended and the tower added in 1900, an entrance hall was created in the eastern third of the front of the church, while the western two thirds served as the narthex. The upper level was a choir loft. In the 1980s, the choir loft was enclosed, and two bathrooms were created (one on each level). In 2004-5, the entrance hall was converted into a kitchen, the choir loft was subdivided into four smaller rooms, and windows were inserted overlooking the nave. The layout of the building currently consists of the following: at the north end, there is a narthex, kitchen, and half bath on the ground floor, and an enclosed choir loft above divided into two bedrooms, a full bath, and two other rooms, while to the south an auditorium space containing a nave with a raised chancel open to the full height of the structure extends through the rest of the building. The floorboards appear to be original throughout the main floor and the choir loft. They have nail marks from the carpeting that covered the floors from as early as 1892 until recently. All the pews, the pulpit, and other church furniture have now been removed. Both original stoves that were added to the building in 1892 have been removed; one pellet stove was added in 1994. In the early 1920s, the building was repainted and redecorated; it is not known what elements of this still exist. Electricity was first installed in the 1920s.

The kitchen, into which the main entrance door with sidelights and pointed-arch transom in the tower base leads, retains its historic wood beadboard ceiling, plaster walls, and wood floorboards. The floorboards are wider towards the nave and narrower towards the entrance, showing where the end of the building was before the ten-foot expansion in 1900. A door in the south wall leads into the nave, while doorways in the west wall led to the narthex and to a flight of stairs to the choir loft. The narthex has the same historic flooring and plaster walls as the kitchen. The Palladian window covers most of its north wall. The south wall contains a very large door opening leading into the nave. Pocket doors, likely dating back to the 1900 expansion, were in this opening until the 1980s.

The choir loft is accessible by the central stairs. Throughout the choir loft, the original wood floorboards remain. Along the south edge of the loft, the original knee wall faced with beadboard remains. Within the second floor of the tower, a wood staircase leads up with a right angle turn to a third level in the tower. This space has a knee wall around the stairwell, plaster walls, a wood door leading into the attic of the main church (in the west wall), and a corrugated metal ceiling. There is also a ladder attached to the south wall leading to a hatch giving access to the open top floor of the tower.

The narthex and kitchen are separated from the auditorium space by an original partition wall. The auditorium, the primary interior space, is a full-height area extending from the partition wall to the south exterior wall. This area from north to south consists of a nave and a chancel, which is raised two steps. Centered on and protruding from the south wall is an apse. It is raised one additional step, has a flat ceiling, and meets the chancel at a large round-arch opening. An archival photo dated ca.1879 shows that the apse was not yet present at that time; it was likely added in 1908. The window casings have rectangular classical molding, which is most likely original, dating to 1857. Painted decorative pressed-tin wainscoting, likely dating to 1900, lines the walls of this entire

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space up to the windowsill level. A large painted tin cornice curves up on all sides of the room into a decoratively painted tin ceiling with a central square ceiling medallion. This ceiling was installed in 1900.

The basement, which was added in 1960, has a small entrance room in the northwest corner where the exterior door and stairs to the nave are located. The main area of the basement extends through the footprint of the building and is an unfinished space with exposed concrete block walls and the framing of the floor above exposed at the ceiling.

Despite the alterations made to adapt this church for residential use, its floor plan, as well as the changes to that floor plan during the church's three significant periods, are clearly readable, understandable, and easily interpretable. In addition, finishes and fabric also survive throughout the building – from framing to decorative embellishment – that document the building's construction and decorative history and which testify to changes in religious practices and architecture in Delaware County over the course of the period of significance.

### **Free Church:**

The Free Church was built in 1857 in a Gothic Revival style during the same time period as the Methodist Episcopal Church. The Free Church is located opposite the Methodist Episcopal Church on the north side of Route 29. The church is rectangular and has three bays with the gable end facing the street. It is a one-story wood-framed structure supported by a dry rubble foundation with a crawl space. A square tower in the center of the façade (south) extends several feet above the steeply pitched gable roof. The roof, which was likely originally covered with wood shingles, now consists of asphalt shingles, a diamond pattern on the east slope and rectangular on the west. The tower originally had an open belfry but this was removed sometime between ca. 1910 and ca. 1940 based on historic photographs, leaving the tower with a flat top. Several other original Gothic features were also removed during those same years: pinnacles at the four corners of the roof, decorative vergeboards at the eaves and gable rakes of the roof and the cornice of the tower. The remaining Gothic elements include vertical board siding, wood finials, pointed-arch windows, trim, and quarrel glazing. A shorter one-story kitchen, which sits on a concrete foundation, was added to the north end of the east elevation in 1946. It has a moderately pitched side gable roof with sheet metal panels over asphalt shingles rising to the height of the fascia of the church roof. The primary entrance to the church is at the base of the tower, while a secondary entrance is located on the south elevation of the addition. The main structure has wood clapboard siding on the east, north, and west elevations, while the façade and the tower have narrow vertical board wood siding. The addition is sided with thin rectangular asbestos cement panels.

The church is set back from the road about twenty feet. The land surrounding it is flat along the road and slopes down along the west and north sides of the building to a low point at the northwest corner. A gravel parking area extends from the main entrance along the road about fifty feet to the east. A strip of grass separates this from the carriage shed, which sits directly to the east of the church. Behind the church stands a large maple tree and a thicket of brush; to the west are several trees and shrubs separating it from an adjacent, unrelated property with a detached house.

### *Church Exterior*

The façade is symmetrically arranged with the tower in the center, protruding slightly from the plane of the wall. The tower abruptly terminates with a simple cornice and flat roof. At the base of the tower is the primary entrance, consisting of a slightly protruding door surround and a door opening which is recessed about three feet. The opening has a steeply pitched central pointed-arch peak. The door is flanked by wood pilasters

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terminating in pointed arches, two on each side, framing the corner posts of the tower. A plywood ramp rises from the ground about a foot to the door. A fixed sixteen-light transom window sits above the door. The transom is surmounted by a triangular louvered vent rising to the top of the central peak of the door opening. Directly above the entrance is a sixteen-over-sixteen wood sash window with louvered shutters topped by a triangular louvered vent with simple wood plank casing. The rest of the elevation is covered in vertical wood board siding. At the bottom end of the gable rake eaves on either side, a decorative carved wood finial hangs down.

The siding of the main east elevation is horizontal clapboard, while the kitchen addition is sided with thin asbestos cement panels. On the church, a tall frieze board separates the clapboard from the eaves, and a simple two-tiered fascia hangs from the eaves. The kitchen addition has a narrow fascia board hanging from the eaves. Each of the first two bays of the east elevation has a tall sixteen-over-sixteen sash window topped by a triangular pointed-arch fixed window with quarrel glazing. The third bay originally had the same window, but this was partially removed and covered by the addition of the kitchen in 1946. Between the two windows is an exterior concrete block chimney which was added in 1960. The south side of the kitchen addition has a central door flanked on either side by one-over-one sash windows. A small wood porch rises two steps to the door. This was added in the late 1990s. The east side of the addition has a concrete block chimney set slightly to the left of the center (added in 1960), and to the left of this is a wood panel hatch covering a framed opening. The north side of the addition has a single six-light fixed window.

The north elevation of the church has clapboard siding from the ground to the gable peak, corner boards, and frieze boards running along the gable rakes. It has no eaves or openings.

The west elevation is divided into three bays, each of which has one of the same sixteen-over-sixteen sash windows topped by triangular pointed-arch fixed windows with quarrel glazing that are found on the east side. The siding is clapboard and the frieze and fascia boards match those of the east elevation.

*Church Interior*

The interior floorplan of the Free Church, like that of the Methodist Episcopal Church, was originally based on the meeting house plan which was prevalent in the 1850s. It contained a small narthex with a choir loft above at the entrance and a large open auditorium space containing a nave with pews and a raised chancel platform. This spatial arrangement has been modified somewhat over the years. The narthex is divided today into three spaces, a vestibule, a bathroom, and a closet. The auditorium remains a single open space, but the raised chancel has been lowered to the same floor level as the nave, as shown by the floor framing seen in the crawl space. The original choir loft remains above the narthex area. The kitchen addition changed the floorplan and circulation patterns of the church and introduced three openings in the east wall of the chancel.

The primary entrance into the church leads into a vestibule with plaster walls and ceiling. There is a narrow chair rail in the space. Directly east of the vestibule is a bathroom and to the west a closet with exposed lath and plaster and a ceiling of untreated wood boards. Above these rooms and partially overhanging them into the nave space is the choir loft, which still retains its original beadboard knee wall about three feet high. The floor is made of wood boards and has a small platform area one step higher than the rest against the south wall, which is faced with plaster and has the remnants of a picture rail spanning across one third of its length. The choir loft is accessed by a wooden staircase in the southwest corner of the auditorium.

The auditorium space, which once contained the nave and a raised chancel, now has the appearance of a single uniform room. The wooden floorboards from the edge of the vestibule to the end of the former nave area are

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arranged lengthwise, while at the former chancel end, they run across the width of the space, showing where the raised portion began. The walls of the auditorium are finished with vertical wood board paneling up to roughly the height of the choir loft, above which the original plaster on lath remains are exposed. Only the lower halves of the full-size, pointed-arched windows that can be seen on the outside show in the auditorium. A flat, not historic ceiling has been constructed above the nave, cutting off the top of the windows and making the space appear smaller. However, above the non-historic ceiling (which has been partially removed), the original decorative beadboard ceiling survives. It consists of wood boards arranged in a variety of diagonal directions. The upper, pointed-arched tops of the windows are visible in this space. Above the historic ceiling, the original timber roof framing also remains intact.

There is a door opening leading to the kitchen near the northeast corner of the auditorium. Above the door, the original frame of the window which is partially infilled is exposed. On either side of the door is a rectangular opening for serving food out of the kitchen. The wood flooring running lengthwise in the kitchen matches the appearance of the nave and chancel floors.

As with the Methodist Episcopal Church, this building has also been altered for non-liturgical uses. However, as with the other church, all of the original floor plan, the framing, and many of the decorative elements that document the church's construction and social history survive – from its spare Gothic Revival aesthetic to its diagonal beadboard ceiling.

### **Carriage Barn:**

A long carriage shed is located to the west of the Free Church. The shed is post and beam construction with five bays, the four to the left being open on the south and the right bay being fully enclosed. Some of the framing members are original while others have been replaced. Board and batten siding covers the sides and rear and fully encloses the east end bay. The flooring consists of wide wood planks, and the entire structure is supported on a dry rubble foundation. It has a saltbox roof with a shorter slope on the façade (south). The roof is covered with turned metal sheets laid over wood boards that are visible from the underside. An archival photograph dated ca. 1879 shows that the carriage shed was originally located on the northeast corner of the Methodist Episcopal Church property. It was moved to its current location to the east of the Free Church in 1921, where it mirrors its former siting and orientation east of the Methodist Episcopal Church. Many, if not most nineteenth-century rural churches in New York had sheds like this; however, this is among only a few that survive.

### **Integrity:**

Overall, both churches and the carriage shed retain sufficient integrity to convey their significance. Though the churches have undergone some alterations and additions, some occurred during the period of significance and are now significant. Other modifications resulting from changes in use have not altered the overall form and layout of their interiors, notably the entrance vestibules and large open auditoriums that are typical and essential features of mid-nineteenth century rural churches. Similarly, the exterior building fabric of both churches has not been significantly changed since their latest alterations. Most of the character defining features of their respective styles remain, and many decorative finishes survive in both buildings. Other changes, such as false ceilings and covered windows, are reversible and have not harmed the historic building fabric.



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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 The property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

**Criteria Considerations**

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

Property is:

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

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Architecture

Social History

**Period of Significance**

1857-1946

**Significant Dates**

1857

1946

1879

1900

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

**Cultural Affiliation**

**Architect/Builder**

Perry and Buckingham

S.W. Scheman

**Criteria Considerations:**

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**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph**

(Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance and applicable criteria.)

The North Harpersfield Churches are locally significant under Criterion A/Social History for their roles in the social and religious development of the hamlet of North Harpersfield and under Criterion C/Architecture as rural examples of modified Greek Revival and Gothic Revival styles. The Methodist Episcopal Church built in 1857 was the primary, and for most of its history the only, religious meeting house in North Harpersfield. Originally built in the Greek Revival style, the church was later modified in several phases with Victorian stylistic embellishments. This was a common trend among Methodist, and more generally Protestant, churches in Delaware County in the later 1800s. The Free Church, built also in 1857, was used for many decades as a community hall by local groups and by the Methodist Episcopal Church's congregation. When the two churches were built in 1857, a Methodist congregation had been present in the hamlet for decades but did not yet have a purpose-built church. Philosophical differences concerning religious practices both among members of the North Harpersfield Methodist congregation itself and in the community at large led some members of the small community to construct the Free Church at the same time the Methodists decided to build their first dedicated church building. The juxtaposition of two popular and competing mid-nineteenth century ecclesiastical architectural styles set these examples apart, even though the Free Church was later owned and used by the Methodist congregation as a meeting hall. The period of significance is 1857-1946, beginning when the churches were built and ending when the last alteration occurred that contributes to their significance.

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**Narrative Statement of Significance**

The hamlet of North Harpersfield is located within the boundaries of the Town of Harpersfield. The Town of Harpersfield is in the northeast area of Delaware County near the borders of Otsego County and Schoharie County. Harpersfield can trace its origin to 1768 when a meeting between the Harpers, who emigrated from Ireland, and the indigenous peoples led to an agreement to purchase a large area of Native American lands between the Delaware and Charlotte rivers.<sup>1</sup> In 1771, Colonel John Harper, for whom the town is named,<sup>2</sup> moved his family from Cherry Valley to Harpers Field, surveyed the newly acquired lands, and established a settlement, shortly after which other settlers began to arrive. The nascent settlement was seized by a force of Loyalists and their native allies in 1777, and the inhabitants fled. Colonel Harper returned in 1783, and the settlement began to prosper once again, officially becoming a town on March 7, 1788. Harpersfield grew quite rapidly during the four decades following its founding, and the town developed sufficient manufacturing capacity to produce all its necessities, while its connection to a turnpike facilitated the town's role as the major center of trade in the county.<sup>3</sup> Located on a high plateau stretching west from the Catskills, the area was also conducive to agricultural production. Many of the early settlers came from New England, and a significant portion were also first-generation immigrants from Ireland and Scotland.

The hamlet of North Harpersfield formed sometime before 1800. An 1869 map shows several shops and houses, a mill, a foundry, and two churches (the Free Church [also referred to as Union Church] and the Methodist

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<sup>1</sup> *The History of Delaware County* (New York: W.W. Munsell & Co., 1880).

<sup>2</sup> J.H. French, *Historic and Statistical Gazetteer of New York State* (Syracuse: R. Pearsall Smith, 1860).

<sup>3</sup> "One Hundred Years Ago: Biographical Sketch of one of the earliest settlers, who moved into Harpersfield one hundred years ago, to wit, in May 1784," *Stamford Mirror*, 6 May 1884.

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Episcopal Church). In 1880, North Harpersfield had “two stores, one grocery, one blacksmith, one wagon maker, one cooper, two shoemakers, and one iron foundry.”<sup>4</sup> North Harpersfield had a schoolhouse as early as 1876 when there were thirty-six students in attendance. A ca. 1900 map of Delaware County shows that Schoolhouse No. 9 of the town of Harpersfield’s district was in North Harpersfield.<sup>5</sup>

The early settlers of Delaware County brought not only their religious beliefs but also their church organizations with them.<sup>6</sup> A wide range of Protestant denominations appeared in the first few decades of the town’s existence. The first congregation in Harpersfield was founded in 1787 by Presbyterians, who built their first meeting house in 1794. A Baptist congregation formed in 1792, and they built a church in 1805. A Quaker group formed in 1810, but it had become extinct by 1880.<sup>7</sup> Methodists began preaching in Delaware County as early as the 1780s, planting the seeds for the later flourishing of the denomination in the area. The circuit-riding preacher system of the Methodists lent itself particularly well to the isolated rural communities of the county and by the end of the nineteenth century Methodism had become the predominant denomination. Although the first Methodist church in the county appeared as early as 1795 in Colchester, Harpersfield did not have a congregation until 1808.<sup>8</sup> In 1816, they had thirty members who met in an old schoolhouse, and in 1823 they formally organized as the Methodist Union Society of the Town of Harpersfield.<sup>9</sup>

A Methodist congregation in the hamlet of North Harpersfield was formed in 1816 by John Bangs, a local Methodist preacher and member of the Sharon Circuit of the Albany District.<sup>10</sup> Some of the members of the Harpersfield congregation helped to establish it.<sup>11</sup> The North Harpersfield congregation did not have a dedicated church until they hired the builders Perry and Buckingham to construct the North Harpersfield Methodist Episcopal Church in the summer of 1857; it was dedicated on November 4<sup>th</sup> of that year.<sup>12</sup> As of 1880, the church was “in a flourishing condition and has a large Sunday school.”<sup>13</sup> It continued in its role as the principal (and often only) church in North Harpersfield for over a century until its congregation was merged with another Methodist congregation located in Jefferson in 1972, at which time they abandoned the North Harpersfield church building. By 1982 it had become the seat of a new religious group and was called the Calvary Full Gospel Assembly Church. This congregation was short-lived, and in 1994 the building was sold to a private owner and became a residence.

In 1857, the same year that the Methodist Episcopal Church was built, another church called the Free Church was constructed across the street. On January 3, 1857, some residents of North Harpersfield adopted a constitution “uniting ourselves into a legal society to erect a free chapel,” and they specified that the chapel “shall be free for the use of any and all religious denominations.”<sup>14</sup> Following the adoption of the constitution,

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<sup>4</sup> *The History of Delaware County.*

<sup>5</sup> E.C. Bridgeman. *Map of Delaware County New York.* “Delaware County NY Genealogy and History Site.” ca.1900. Accessed 11 April 2023. <https://www.dcnhistory.org/HarpersfieldMapSchools.html>.

<sup>6</sup> David Murray, ed., “Section XIII: Churches and Church Movements,” in *Delaware County, New York, History of the Century, 1797-1897* (Delhi, N.Y.: William Clark, 1898), 133.

<sup>7</sup> *The History of Delaware County.*

<sup>8</sup> Murray, 135-137.

<sup>9</sup> *The History of Delaware County.*

<sup>10</sup> William R. Phinney, *North Harpersfield* (1972) (Madison, New Jersey: United Methodist Archives and History Center, 2014), 1.

<sup>11</sup> *The History of Delaware County.*

<sup>12</sup> Phinney, 5.

<sup>13</sup> *The History of Delaware County.*

<sup>14</sup> *Free Church Record* (North Harpersfield, New York), microfiche records from the collection of the William Roland Phinney papers at the United Methodist Archives and History Center, General Commission on Archives and History, Madison, New Jersey.

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donations were taken to fund the construction of the Free Church.<sup>15</sup> It cost \$1,400 and was built by S.W. Scheman. The creation of the Free Church as a place for any denomination to worship was a reaction to the refusal of the Methodist Episcopal Church congregation to allow a Christian Church elder to preach in their church.<sup>16</sup> The Christian Church sect had been formed in the late 1700s by Calvinists displeased with the doctrine of predestination, and one of their central tenets was fraternity with Christians of all denominations.<sup>17</sup> This philosophy is present in the Free Church's constitution, and Elder Kneland Hartwell, a member of the Christian Church congregation in nearby Summit, contributed, directly or indirectly, to the organization of the Free Church.<sup>18</sup> Nevertheless, the Free Church was not established as a Christian Church. Article 3 of the constitution states that "It shall be free for any religious denominations, and no one order of Christians shall be intitled [sic] to use it more than half of the time."<sup>19</sup> The Christian Church did, however, make extensive use of it, for *The History of Delaware County* states that "it is used mostly by the Christians," and Elder Daniel Grant of the East Delhi Christian Church sometimes preached there.<sup>20 21</sup>

Ultimately, whatever congregations were using the Free Church struggled to maintain themselves, and by 1880 they had vanished, as the Free Church was being used by the Methodists "as a sort of back kitchen to hold singing schools."<sup>22</sup> Though the Methodist Episcopal Church congregation used it in this fashion as an auxiliary hall for a time, it was not owned by them, and it served also as a general meeting space for the community. Such a use had already occurred as early as 1862 when the Free Church was the venue for "The people of North Harpersfield... [to have] a series of lectures, dissertations, &c., every two weeks," but it became increasingly common from around 1880 onwards. In 1887 it was being used by the Dramatic Club of North Harpersfield, which funded repair work that year. Eventually, this role as a community meeting space became its sole function under the aegis of the North Harpersfield Community Hall Association. In 1922, the association began to rent the space for a fee.<sup>23 24</sup> Many local events were held in it, such as the performance of a play in 1926, a "clambake feast" with more than 500 attendees in 1930, and the meeting of an animal breeding cooperative in 1949.<sup>25 26 27</sup> It continued in use as a community hall until at least 1982, finally being sold to a private individual along with the carriage shed in 2020.<sup>28</sup> The Free Church was an important local meeting space in the North Harpersfield community for over one hundred years. Its significance as such is heightened by the fact that there are no mentions of other local community gathering spaces in newspapers or on maps.

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<sup>15</sup> Marge Dayton, "The History of the Community Hall," in *A Bit of North Harpersfield History* (Collection of Harpersfield Historical Society, 795 Colonel Harper Dr., Harpersfield, NY 13786, unknown date).

<sup>16</sup> *Free Church Record*.

<sup>17</sup> Kathleen LaFrank, *National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, Christian Church* (National Park Service, Washington, D.C., 2000), 3.

<sup>18</sup> Phinney, 6.

<sup>19</sup> *Free Church Record*.

<sup>20</sup> *The History of Delaware County*.

<sup>21</sup> LaFrank, *National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, Christian Church*, 4.

<sup>22</sup> *Mirror* (Stamford), 3 February 1880.

<sup>23</sup> "Locals and Miscellany," *Republican* (Delhi, New York), 22 February 1862.

<sup>24</sup> Dayton.

<sup>25</sup> "Play at North Harpersfield," *Stamford Mirror-Recorder*, 21 July 1926.

<sup>26</sup> "N. Harpersfield Bake Best Ever," *Stamford Mirror-Recorder*, 28 August 1930.

<sup>27</sup> "Farm Bureau Plans Meetings," *Delaware Republican-Express*, 1 December 1949.

<sup>28</sup> "Winter in North Harpersfield," *Daily Star*, 2 February 1982.

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*Architectural Context*

The increasing popularity of Methodism in Delaware County throughout the nineteenth century discussed above led many communities in Delaware County to construct a Methodist church during the first half of the century. The basic form of these churches followed the standard pattern typical of most Protestant denominations in Central New York, consisting of a rectangular, wood-frame, three- or four-bay building with a gable roof.<sup>29</sup> The majority of the churches employed the Greek Revival style, which was very popular in the region throughout the second quarter of the nineteenth century for civic and religious buildings, as well as for residences. Although competing styles such as the Gothic Revival came into favor in the second half of the century, the Greek Revival continued to be employed for some time, as is evidenced by the fact that when the Methodist congregation in the Town of Harpersfield built a new church in 1871, they included in their design most of the archetypal features of the Greek Revival style, including a front-end gable, heavy entablature, paneled doors, symmetrical form, moderately pitched roof, and white or light walls (omitting, however, the use of columns and pilasters and introducing a few elements of other styles, such as a corner tower).

The North Harpersfield Methodist Episcopal Church, as originally built by Perry and Buckingham, was influenced both in form and style by the current trends in Protestant church construction in Delaware County. It had the typical rectangular form, shallow roof pitch, and front-end gable of the Greek Revival style. It also had a cornice,<sup>30</sup> though this was later replaced on all but the south elevation with a full entablature. It is not known if the Doric pilasters at the rear corners were original features or if they were added later, but they were present by ca. 1910, as shown in historic photographs.

Subsequent alterations to the church exemplify a trend amongst Protestant churches in Delaware County of being modified later in the nineteenth century with features of other Victorian styles, such as the Gothic Revival. Typically, the Greek Revival form and features were largely retained, while a selection of new elements were added, the most common being stained glass, corner towers, and spires. Three examples of this trend include the Presbyterian churches at West Kortright, North Kortright, and Davenport:

All three retain their rectangular form, broad gable roof, and original cornice or frieze detail. Yet all three also received new double entrances; two of the three have uneven towers; two have open belfries, all three have large central stained-glass windows on their facades, and all three have various kinds of Victorian era motifs, such as brackets, spindles, scroll-work, etc.<sup>31</sup>

Among the Methodist churches in Delaware County which were built in a Greek Revival style and later embellished with elements of late-Victorian period styles are those in Franklin and Andes. In the case of the North Harpersfield Methodist Episcopal Church, the alterations occurred in two major phases, with some minor work in intervening years. The reframing of the roof with a steeper pitch in 1879 reflected the steeply pitched roofs typical of Gothic Revival buildings. The corner belfry tower and stained glass that were added in 1900 were also typical Victorian-era modifications. The decorative shingles on the gable and tower are an additional detail intended to emphasize the change in style. The heavy entablature and the Palladian window which were also added in 1900 are classical in style, so it is curious that they were introduced at the same time as the other elements.

<sup>29</sup> Kathleen LaFrank, *National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, United Presbyterian Church of Davenport* (National Park Service, Washington, D.C., 2017), 8-9.

<sup>30</sup> Simon B. Champion, ed. *Mirror* (Bloomville), 28 July 1857.

<sup>31</sup> LaFrank, 9-10.

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Another aspect of the late-nineteenth century changes occurring in Protestant churches concerned interior decorations. In response to an increased desire among Protestants to make church services more appealing and engaging, there was a push to make church interiors more comfortable, to arrange seats circularly around a central pulpit, to add colorful decorative finishes, and to install stained glass. While the overall Greek Revival form of the interior, consisting of a narthex and a large auditorium containing a nave and raised chancel, was not greatly altered by the stylistic changes at the Methodist Episcopal Church, these trends in interior design were reflected in the 1900 alterations, both in the stained glass and in the decoratively painted tin ceiling. The creation of dedicated space for holding Sunday School was another objective of the reforms.<sup>32</sup> In keeping with this, the narthex, which was expanded in 1900, was used for many years as a Sunday School room.

While the Greek Revival style continued in limited use in the third quarter of the nineteenth century, the Gothic Revival style was quickly gaining favor. Its typical features included pointed arches for doors and windows, pinnacles and finials, decorative vergeboard, stained glass, irregular form with front end and cross gables, and steeply pitched roofs. In 1857, while the Methodist Episcopal Church of North Harpersfield was under construction, work on a second church building, the Free Church, began across the street. Interestingly, it was designed not in the Greek Revival but rather in the Gothic Revival style. It is possible that this choice of a style so different from that of the Methodist church was a deliberate attempt by the founders of the Free Church to highlight the differences in beliefs and practices that led them to leave the Methodist congregation and establish their own church. As originally built, the Free Church incorporated many Gothic features, including pointed arches, steeply pitched roof, vergeboard, pinnacles, finials, and an ornate belfry with ogee arch openings atop the tower. At some point between ca. 1910 and ca. 1940, as shown by photographs, the belfry, the pinnacles at the corners of the roof, and the vergeboards were removed, reducing its Gothic character somewhat, but the other elements remain. The Free Church is significant as one of the earliest, if not the first, church in Delaware County built purely in the Gothic Revival style. It is interesting to note that another Christian Church congregation, in nearby East Delhi, Delaware County, built a church in 1860 that boasts similar Gothic Revival features, though it also has a Greek Revival form and elements. It is unknown if its Gothic features were original or added later, but it is possible that the two churches, which shared an association with some Christian church beliefs, also shared similar architectural influences.

The kitchen addition was built onto the east elevation of the Free Church in 1946 to support its function as a community hall. This addition did not contribute to its stylistic significance, but it did facilitate the building's strictly secular purpose at that time and for years afterward. Overall, the Free Church still clearly conveys both its Gothic Revival design and its communal function.

The carriage shed's exact date of construction is not known, but it certainly existed before 1876, when the Methodist Episcopal Church purchased the land directly to its east (where an archival photograph of ca. 1879 shows the carriage shed was originally located), for the deed of sale "speaks of already existing church sheds."<sup>33</sup> What alterations, if any, occurred over time are not documented. However, it retains the appearance and characteristics of a typical rural structure used for the purpose of sheltering horses during worship. It lost some of its integrity of location when it was moved across the street in 1921, though its current orientation adjacent to the Free Church mirrors its former siting, and it still retains its association as a functional accessory structure to the church buildings.

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<sup>32</sup> LaFrank, 10.

<sup>33</sup> Phinney, 6.

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## 9. Major Bibliographical References

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

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- "N. Harpersfield Bake Best Ever." *Stamford Mirror-Recorder*, 28 August 1930.
- North Harpersfield (1869 Map)*. In *Business and Residential Directory*, 1869. Collection of David Sundberg.
- "One Hundred Years Ago: Biographical Sketch of one of the earliest settlers, who moved into Harpersfield one hundred years ago, to wit, in May 1784." *Stamford Mirror*, 6 May 1884.

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Phinney, William R. *North Harpersfield*. 1972. Madison, New Jersey: United Methodist Archives and History Center, 2014.

“Play at North Harpersfield.” *Stamford Mirror-Recorder*, 21 July 1926.

Sundberg, David. *The Two Churches of North Harpersfield*. Self-published, 2021.

“Winter in North Harpersfield.” *Daily Star*, 2 February 1982.

**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): 23NR00098



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### 10. Geographical Data

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**Acreage of Property** .57 acres  
(Do not include previously listed resource acreage.)

#### Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS 84: \_\_\_\_\_  
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

- |                        |                       |
|------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Latitude: 42.473342 | Longitude: -74.689889 |
| 2. Latitude: 42.473130 | Longitude: -74.689490 |

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

The boundary is indicated by a heavy line on the enclosed map with scale.

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

The property includes a total of .57 acres on the northwest and southeast side of County Highway 29. The boundary was drawn to include the current tax parcels for the Methodist Episcopal Church property and the Free Church property owned by one person.

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### 11. Form Prepared By

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name/title Alec Colpo / Architectural Historian contact: Erin Czernecki, NYSHPO  
organization Thaler Reilly Wilson Architecture and Preservation date September 22, 2023  
street & number 25 Monroe Street, Suite 202 telephone 518-375-1485  
city or town Albany state NY zip code 12210  
e-mail admin@trw-arch.com

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### Additional Documentation

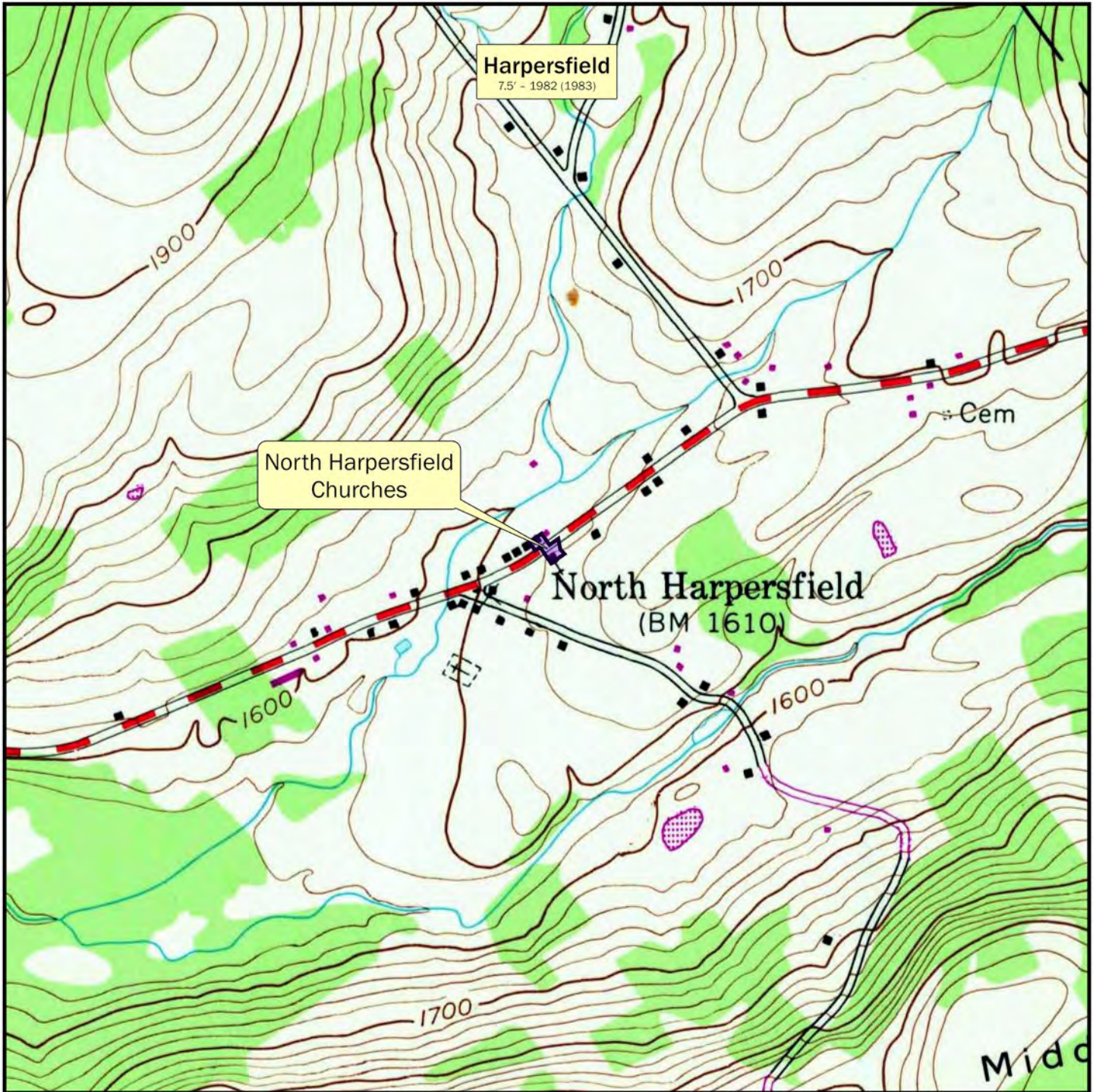
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Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **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.)

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 North Harpersfield Churches

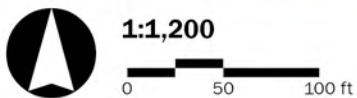


Projection: WGS 1984 UTM Zone 18N

Mapped 01/19/2024 by Matthew W. Shepherd, NYSHPO

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 Nomination Boundary (0.49 ac)



Projection: WGS 1984 UTM Zone 18N

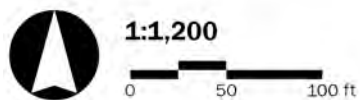
New York State Orthoimagery Year: 2021

Mapped 01/19/2024 by Matthew W. Shepherd, NYSHPO



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**Note:** The Delaware County tax parcel boundaries appear to be inaccurate at this location.  
The nomination boundary uses survey data and aerial imagery to approximate the intended area.



Projection: WGS 1984 UTM Zone 18N

 Nomination Boundary (0.49 ac)  Tax Parcels

Delaware County Parcel Year: 2021



Mapped 01/19/2024 by Matthew W. Shepherd, NYSHPO

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View of North Harpersfield and churches, before 1879.

Village of North Harpersfield.

*Historic view looking northwest at Methodist Episcopal Church before 1879 alterations*

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*Historic view looking southeast at Methodist Episcopal Church ca.1905*

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Free Church, c.1910.

*Historic view of the south and east elevations of Free Church ca.1910*

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**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.

Name of Property: North Harpersfield Churches

City or Vicinity: Jefferson

County: Delaware State: New York

Photographer: David Sundberg

Date Photographed: 9/25/2021, 3/23/2023, 4/11/2023, 6/5/2023

NY\_Delaware County\_North Harpersfield Churches\_0001  
*Overview of churches looking north*

NY\_Delaware County\_North Harpersfield Churches\_0002  
*North façade of Methodist Episcopal Church, looking east*

NY\_Delaware County\_North Harpersfield Churches\_0003  
*East elevation of Methodist Episcopal Church*

NY\_Delaware County\_North Harpersfield Churches\_0004  
*View of both churches, looking north*

NY\_Delaware County\_North Harpersfield Churches\_0005  
*West elevations of Methodist Episcopal Church*

NY\_Delaware County\_North Harpersfield Churches\_0006  
*North door of Methodist Episcopal Church*

NY\_Delaware County\_North Harpersfield Churches\_0007  
*Looking north in the kitchen of the Methodist Episcopal Church*

NY\_Delaware County\_North Harpersfield Churches\_0008  
*Looking east in narthex of the Methodist Episcopal Church*

NY\_Delaware County\_North Harpersfield Churches\_0009  
*Looking north in nave of the Methodist Episcopal Church*

NY\_Delaware County\_North Harpersfield Churches\_0010  
*Looking south toward chancel in nave of Methodist Episcopal Church*



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NY\_Delaware County\_North Harpersfield Churches\_0011  
*Detail of painted tin ceiling in Methodist Episcopal Church*

NY\_Delaware County\_North Harpersfield Churches\_0012  
*Detail of door surround in Methodist Episcopal Church*

NY\_Delaware County\_North Harpersfield Churches\_0013  
*Detail of pressed tin wainscoting in Methodist Episcopal Church*

NY\_Delaware County\_North Harpersfield Churches\_0014  
*Choir loft of the Methodist Episcopal Church*

NY\_Delaware County\_North Harpersfield Churches\_0015  
*Detail of roof framing in Methodist Episcopal Church*

NY\_Delaware County\_North Harpersfield Churches\_0016  
*Basement of the Methodist Episcopal Church*

NY\_Delaware County\_North Harpersfield Churches\_0017  
*South façade and carriage shed of the Free Church*

NY\_Delaware County\_North Harpersfield Churches\_0018  
*West elevation of the Free Church*

NY\_Delaware County\_North Harpersfield Churches\_0019  
*East elevation and carriage shed of the Free Church*

NY\_Delaware County\_North Harpersfield Churches\_0020  
*Main entrance of the Free Church*

NY\_Delaware County\_North Harpersfield Churches\_0021  
*Looking northeast in the nave of the Free Church*

NY\_Delaware County\_North Harpersfield Churches\_0022  
*Kitchen addition, looking west into nave of the Free Church*

NY\_Delaware County\_North Harpersfield Churches\_0023  
*Choir loft in the Free Church*

NY\_Delaware County\_North Harpersfield Churches\_0024  
*View of the beadboard ceiling above the drop ceiling of the Free Church*

NY\_Delaware County\_North Harpersfield Churches\_0025  
*Detail of upper windows on east elevation of the Free Church*

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NY\_Delaware County\_North Harpersfield Churches\_0026  
*Detail of roofing system for the Free Church*

NY\_Delaware County\_North Harpersfield Churches\_0027  
*Crawlspace under the Free Church*

NY\_Delaware County\_North Harpersfield Churches\_0028  
*South elevation of carriage shed*

NY\_Delaware County\_North Harpersfield Churches\_0029  
Interior view of carriage shed

**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.).

**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.



North Harpersfield, County Hwy 29 to West



0  
2833



ME Church, to west



North Harpersfield Churches, to north.



ME Church from road, to east



ME Church, main entry door, with stained glass window, to south.





PUT  
LUNCH  
SCRAPS  
— —  
REFUSE  
CANS





ME Church nave, to north.



ME Church nave, to south.



ME Church, detail of nave ceiling.















Free Church with kitchen addition and carriage shed, to north





Free Church with carriage shed, to west



Free Church main entry door, to west



Free Church nave from choir loft stairs, to north.

EXIT



NO SMOKING

Put Cans And Bottles Here







Free Church choir loft, to west



Freed Church, Original ceiling above dropped ceiling





Free Church above nave ceiling, to south.





Free Church carriage shed, to north



Free Church carriage shed interior, to west