NPS Form 10-900 OMB No. 1024-0018 (Expires 5/31/2012)

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NAT. REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

742

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form.* If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. **Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).**

1. Name of Property

historic name Universalist Meeting House of Sheshequin

other names/site number Sheshequin Universalist Church

2. Location

street & number 6752 Sheshequin Road | N/A | not for publication

city or town Sheshequin Township | N/A | vicinity

state Pennsylvania code PA County Bradford code 015 zip code 18850

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** X **statewide** __ **local**

Andrea L MacDonald / Acting Deputy SHPO July 29, 2013
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

PA Historical and Museum Commission
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:)

for Edson H. Beall 9.18.13
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

Universalist Meeting House of Sheshequin
Name of Property

Bradford County, PA
County and State

5. Classification

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

- [x] private
- [ ] public - Local
- [ ] public - State
- [ ] public - Federal

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

- [x] building(s)
- [ ] district
- [ ] site
- [ ] structure
- [ ] object

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1	0	**Total**

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

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)

RELIGION/Religious Facility

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)

RELIGION/Religious Facility

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions.)

EARLY REPUBLIC/Federal

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: Stone
walls: Wood/weatherboard
roof: Asphalt
other:

Narrative Description

Physical Description

The Universalist Meeting House of Sheshequin (sometimes designated the Universalist Church of Sheshequin) constructed in 1827 is a fine example of the late Federal style. It is a two story rectangular edifice of heavy timber construction covered with clapboard. It faces west. William Marvin of Pike, Bradford County, was the architect and builder, and the edifice has the following dimensions: width, 33' 2"; depth, 43' 2"; height from foundation to eave, 35'; height from foundation to peak of bell tower, 71'; and slope of the gable roof, 4/12. It has no basement, and rests on a dry-laid stone foundation and piers. Surrounded by the Sheshequin Valley Cemetery (photo 5; in which the largest number of Bradford County's Revolutionary War veterans are buried and which predates the meeting house) to the north and east, a private dwelling to the south and Sheshequin Road to the west, it appears much as it did when it was first erected in 1827.

The meeting house is situated on high ground on a .4 acre site along bucolic Sheshequin Road (SR 1043) immediately north of the village of Sheshequin in Bradford County. The site in turn is surrounded by fields and overlooks the Susquehanna River to the west and appears much as it did when the meeting house was first constructed. Access to the building is on a short gravel road leading to the cemetery or by parking on the lawn adjacent to Sheshequin Road in front of the building and ascending the steps in front of the meeting house. The only contributing structure on the site is the meeting house, while the wall in front of the cemetery and meeting house, which was also laid dry but replaced with a mortar wall in 1910, is an uncounted landscape feature.

Architectural Description

Exterior

The Universalist Meeting House of Sheshequin is a two story rectangular building four bays long and three bays wide. The building is of heavy timber frame construction covered with clapboards. The perimeter rests on a dry-laid stone foundation, while the core of the structure is supported with nine pillars of stone two feet square at even intervals. The roof is covered with asphalt shingles. Extending above the gable roof line are the bell tower and a small chimney. The bell tower is pierced with two narrow, louvered openings on the north, south and west sides, while the east side has one such opening. Wood quoins adorn the corners of the tower with clapboard between the quoins while its pyramidal roof of wood shakes arches gracefully upward and terminates in a slender spire. This tower was modified in 1846 by removing the upper stage thus shortening it. Nevertheless, the relationship between the present tower and the mass of the building remains in good proportion. A 520 pound bell cast by the Meneely Bell Foundry Company of West Troy, New York, was added in 1874 (Church Records). The short, brick chimney, approximately two-thirds back from the front of the building, extends a short distance above the roof line

The west facing gable (photo 1) is the front or main facade of the church and is divided into three bays by four, two story, fluted, Doric pilasters supporting a Mutulary Doric entablature and pediment with a blank tympanum of flush boards. The cornice of this entablature and the perimeter of the tympanum feature a band of raised blocks forming dentils. The central bay of this façade contains the only entrance to the building consisting of a pair of inward swinging, six panel wood doors. The door surround consists of a paneled wood pilaster on either side supporting an entablature. Above the entrance door is a Palladian window with a twelve-over-twelve central sash flanked by six-over-four sash on each side. The window incorporates four paneled pilasters, an arch with keystone over the central portion, and lintels over the side windows with intricate dentil ornamentation. The two side bays each have two identical double hung windows, one at the second floor level and the other at the first. Church records indicate that in 1882 the Ladies Aid Society, for the sum of $69.00, had the multi-panel window sashes (probably nine over six) replaced with the present two over two. These windows match all the other double hung windows on the main body of the building; all have a two-over-two sash and simple wood cornice at the head.

The north and south sides of the edifice (photos 2 and 3) have plain clapboard walls of four bays with two shuttered windows one above the other in each bay. These match the typical windows described on the west façade. Ornamentation is limited to two corner pilasters wrapping around the west end, and the entablature which wraps around from the front to form the eaves.

The east, or rear, façade (photo 4) is simpler, having four shuttered windows, two upper and two lower, again matching the other sides. This façade has simple corner boards, an un-ornamented raking cornice at the gabled roof edge, and short returns of the side eaves. The entire building is painted white.

Interior

Stepping into the church one enters the somewhat narrow vestibule or narthex (photo 6) that traverses the entire width of the edifice with a door on each side of the eastern wall leading to the sanctuary and a stair case at each end leading to the balcony. Beneath each staircase is a door accessing a closet area. The west wall is wainscoted to the height of the windows. The east wall of this room is convex which mirrors the concave wall behind the high pulpit.

The interior's plaster walls are wrought of lime, mortar and horsehair held in place with split board and lathe construction, and wainscoting the height of the window sills covers the north, east and south walls. The predominant color of the interior is white with blue and cream trim, while floors on the balcony are gray. References to the original color scheme cannot be found, but one reference relates that in 1904 M. L. Gore painted a large oval on the ceiling representing the sky with clouds and doves flying downward (since painted over). There are also records that verify certain interior walls were papered at one time or another. Although the floors of the sanctuary and vestibule are carpeted, the flooring is original and can be seen in the balcony (photo 12) as random width boards. Many coats of paint have hidden the grain and coloration of the wood, but the presence of knots and the signs of remarkably little wear seem to indicate that the floors may have been wrought of yellow pine that was prevalent in the forests of that area. The pews on the first level (photos 8 and 9) have doors and face the high pulpit, which is positioned at the front of the structure rather than the back as is found in most churches. On each side of the pulpit are boxed pews arranged in a square with seating on three sides and the fourth side open to the aisle, an arrangement not uncommon in churches of this era and sometimes referred to as the "amen corner." They are all regular in size, not variable as they had been before 1800. The remaining pews on this level are arranged in three sections trisected by two aisles with the two sections contiguous to the north and south walls being raised about three inches. These rows of pews have doors, and the center section is divided down the middle by a wooden partition that was probably used to separate men and women congregants in the early days. The back of each pew is a solid board 16" in width. The most impressive feature of this interior space is the high pulpit (photo 10) set in a concave aedicula which is accessed by a stairway flanking each side of the pulpit and supported by four Tuscan columns. Two low doors access the pulpit similar to the doors on the pews. The entablature supported by these columns has a molded architrave beneath a plain frieze, while the cornice has a delicate molding with blue, painted dentils beneath. The front of the pulpit is divided into three panels by four pilasters, the center panel being thrust slightly forward and the entire pulpit capped with a bold, deep crown molding. A gracefully cut back-board further delineates the pulpit. Complementing the concave niche of the pulpit (photo 11), the ceiling has a shallow, elliptical vault traversing the long axis of the building. This combination of curved interior surfaces is an outstanding feature for an early 19th century rural church. Plaster pilasters define the sides of the niche, while the arch of the niche and both sides of the vault are defined with bold, compound ogee plaster moldings painted blue. In front of the high pulpit is a slightly elevated lectern and behind it a rectilinear chair fabricated by a Mr. VanDuzen of Standing Stone (Church Records). Both are recent, circa 1960, and were installed to eliminate the need to climb the stairs to the high pulpit which have rather narrow treads; they remain in place due to a lack of storage space. Since attendance has not filled the church for many years, the high pulpit which gives the minister a complete view of congregants in the balcony as well as the main floor is not needed. The entrance door hinges, as well as the door hinges on the pews, were the only hardware used originally, but latches were finally installed on the entrance door in1830. The door to the bell tower still has no metal hardware latch, but rather a wood button.

The second floor balcony is accessed by the stairways in the vestibule. This balcony is supported by five square columns resting on plinths the height of the pews on the ground floor and traverses the north, east and south sides of the church. The north and south sides house two rows of slip pews while the east side has three rows of slip pews that are bisected by an aisle. The facing wall on all three sides of the balcony is paneled and capped with a bold crown molding, and a delicate dentil molding painted blue traverses the entire bottom edge of the balcony paneling (photo 11). The north, east and west sides of the balcony are wainscoted to the height of the window sills. On this balcony level and directly above the vestibule is a small room (photo 7) that eventually served as the Sunday school classroom in 1830 or 1831. Its east wall, like that of the vestibule, is convex, but it has never received a finish coat of plaster. Moreover, it is covered with graffiti and autographs listing many congregants and visitors to the building from bygone days. The west wall houses the Palladian window. At the south end of this room is a staircase leading to the attic and bell tower. In the attic the structural wood trusses, which form a clear span across the 33 foot dimension of the building, can be seen. The trusses appear to

be supported by heavy timber columns concealed in plaster pilasters on the interior of the outside walls as can be seen on the first level.

Originally there were no electrical or heating systems in the building. Electricity was installed by George R. Fay when it became available in 1927 (Church Records). It is difficult to determine exactly when the two wood stoves were installed in the sanctuary, but it must have been a relatively early addition, for all existing photos of the building show a chimney which was fabricated of bricks manufactured nearby. The mortar for the bricks was of clay and straw. These stoves (no longer in use) placed along the north and south walls dominate the interior in an unusual manner in that the stove pipes rise from each stove to the lower edge of the balcony then traverse east then make right angle bends and join in a small chamber at the center of the east balcony and thence upward through the ceiling and roof. Gracefully curved band iron supports affixed to the balcony support this elaborate system.

Over the years the meeting house has been faithfully maintained. Church records indicate that the meeting house had a new shingle roof done in 1876 by Omar Tomkins for a cost of $77.00. In 1909, O. D. Kinney provided two bonds for the purpose of having the income from the interest used to keep the cemetery grounds in good condition and the church in good repair. He also expressed his wish that the architecture of the church never be changed especially in regard to the present high pulpit and pews. The following year the front porch and steps were repointed and modified so that the steps made a direct westerly approach to the building; the original steps approached a landing from the north and south sides of the porch which was convenient for discharging passengers from horse drawn carriages directly onto the landing. At this time, the old wall in front of the cemetery and meeting house was torn down and relaid with cement by Harry Vallilee. In 1923, a new asphalt shingle roof was executed. The top of the chimney was relaid several times, but the original chimney with its straw and clay mortar was kept intact from the attic floor to a point below the roof. The present roofing was installed in 1972 by Webster's Roofing. In 1980, major maintenance was performed. Copper flashing was put around the bell tower and chimney as well as the cornice of the windows on the south and east sides and the cornice of the front entrance. A storm-water runoff system was created by digging a trench underneath the eaves to the foundation. Clay tile was laid in the trench to deflect water away from the foundation and directed that water to two reservoirs, one on each side, measuring 4'x4'x4' filled with aggregate to hold excessive runoff. Repointing of the front porch and stone wall was also done at this time and missing edge molding for a few windows was replaced. New louvers were made for the north and south sides of the bell tower. The major undertaking, however, was the replacement of the north sill beam by four ten foot sections of a hemlock beam of similar size. Over the years, standard maintenance has been and continues to be performed, but always with the intent of preserving the historic architecture and appearance of the meeting house.

Integrity

The Universalist Meeting House of Sheshequin retains all aspects of integrity. It has never been moved and, therefore, retains integrity of **location**. In terms of **design**, the only change that has been made is the shortening of the steeple in 1846; however, this is a minor change and does not greatly impact the original design of the meeting house. The meeting house also retains integrity of **materials** and **workmanship**; changes that have been made have been relegated almost exclusively to maintenance and upkeep, so they have not greatly altered the original materials and workmanship. The **setting** of the meeting house remains rural and agricultural with very little modern development. The meeting house also retains its **feeling** and **association** as an early 19th century rural church.

In sum, the meeting house's location close to the village of Sheshequin as well as the village of Ulster and the towns of Athens and Towanda explains why it became a pivotal center for Universalists. William Marvin's architectural accomplishment in the edifice is immediately evident from its well-chosen setting amid the cemetery and fields overlooking the Susquehanna River to the fine workmanship of the carpenters and cabinet makers of the day who gave the entrance and interior an exuberance of detail and sophistication of ornamentation that was remarkable for a rural church in 1827. Certainly one is impressed with the historic character of the building, and over the years the congregants have done much to retain this link to their past by preserving it in fine state.

Universalist Meeting House of Sheshequin
Name of Property

Bradford County, PA
County and State

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

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

Property is:

- [x] 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

Period of Significance
1827

Significant Dates
1827

Significant Person
(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation
N/A

Architect/Builder
Marvin, William

Period of Significance (justification)
The period of significance is marked by the construction of the church in 1827.

Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)
The Universalist Meeting House of Sheshequin meets Criteria Consideration A as a religious building that derives its primary significance from its architecture

Statement of Significance

The Universalist Meeting House of Sheshequin meets National Register Criterion C in the area of Architecture. As a religious building that derives its significance from architectural distinction, it also meets Criterion Consideration A. This meeting house with its high quality woodwork (the work of skilled craftsmen), its exuberant interior and exterior detailing, and its sophisticated ornamentation, is a significant example of Federal architecture in rural Bradford County. The period of significance is 1827, the date construction was completed.

History of the Universalist Meeting House of Sheshequin

The Yankee-Pennamite Wars of the late 18th Century did much to influence the development of the northern tier of Pennsylvania as Connecticut Yankees migrated to the Wyoming Valley in an attempt to establish that colony's claim to land granted to them by Charles II in 1662. Unfortunately, Charles granted William Penn an over-lapping stretch of land in 1681, and to complicate matters, both sides purchased the same land by treaties with the Indians. With the final resolution of the matter in 1785, establishing Pennsylvania's claim to the territory, Connecticut Yankees continued their westward migration, and the fertile valley at the confluence of the Chemung and Susquehanna Rivers and the area immediately south was a prime attraction. It was here in the last quarter of the 18th Century that the villages of Athens, Ulster and Sheshequin were established and began to thrive. Sheshequin is derived from the Indian term Tsche-tsche-quan-nink, signifying "The place of a rattle," the medicine-man's rattle. Tsche-tsche-quan-nink embraced the plains and Indian towns in what is now Sheshequin and Ulster. For many years, to distinguish the white settlement on the west side of the river from that on the east side, the former was given the name of Old Sheshequin and the latter New Sheshequin. Since the division of Ulster in 1820, the name Sheshequin has been confined to the township on the east side of the river. Sheshequin was originally embraced in the Connecticut townships of Ulster and Claverack (Heverly 1902: 292).

The majority of settlers in the area brought with them their church affiliation, which in most cases was of a Calvinistic bent be it Baptist, Methodist or Presbyterian with the exception of Catholicism introduced by the settlers of Azilum in 1793. Noah Murray, a Baptist minister from Litchfield County, Connecticut, was prominent in the Wyoming Valley. He was appointed a justice of the quarter sessions November 23, 1788, and commissioned a justice of the peace for Luzerne County a year later. Despite his Baptist affiliation, he embraced Universalism as early as 1785, and, after preaching a short time in Duchess County, New York, settled near Tioga Point, the present site of Athens. He remained there until his death in 1811, with the exception of a brief stint spent in Philadelphia. Murray was able to convince another Baptist, Moses Park, of the efficacy of Universalism, and Park, in turn, got the majority of his congregation to endorse Universalism. This marked the beginning of a vital Universalist movement in the area of Athens-Sheshequin (Heverly 1902: 269).

Records indicate that in 1808 a Universalist Society was formed at Sheshequin serviced by itinerant preachers coming from Philadelphia including Nathaniel Stacey, George Rogers and A. C. Thomas. Evidently, itinerant ministry coupled with lay ministry continued until the erection of the Universalist Meeting House of Sheshequin in 1827, at which time Rev. G. S. Ames, whose wife was the daughter of Moses Park, was installed as pastor and remained there for some years. A committee of congregants began a voluntary subscription to raise funds in 1822 for the building of a church which was located adjacent to the Sheshequin Cemetery in which the earliest marked grave is that of Jedediah SHAW, 5 May 1800. The first person buried here was probably Mrs. Eunice Spalding, who died 6 Dec 1790. After the meeting house's construction in 1827, the earlier, unrelated cemetery functioned as one with it. In 1913, the Society elected to separate the church building from the cemetery by establishing the Sheshequin Valley Cemetery Association. They have functioned as independent organizations to this day. William Marvin of Pike (now in Stevens Township, Bradford County) was the architect/builder aided by the citizens who made "bees" to haul stone and procure timber (Heverly 1902: 273). An old account book of Ebenezer Shaw records a charge of one gallon whiskey, to aid in hauling stone for church. A Sunday school was introduced in 1830 superintended by Julia H. Kinney. From this Sheshequin nucleus the following Universalist Societies developed: Athens, Sylvania, Standing Stone, Troy, Towanda, Springfield, and Orwell (Craft 1878: 169). In fact, Sheshequin was the center of Universalism in Bradford, Tioga and Susquehanna Counties until the Universalist congregation was organized in Towanda, the county seat of Bradford County, in 1866, whereupon Towanda assumed this vital role.

The fortunes of the Universalist Society of Sheshequin waxed and waned through the years with membership decidedly declining into the mid-20th century. Yet even in the worst of times the Sheshequin Meeting House appeared to be in fairly

constant use. On May 6, 1845, a charter was approved by the First Universalist Society of Sheshequin in which Article 9 states "That the meeting house belonging to this society shall be open for all Christian preachers of any denomination to hold meetings in, when not occupied by a preacher of the denomination of this society." The object of this article at that time was to prevent the church property from drifting to other denominations, and it was successful in that it kept the building and site intact through fairly constant use (Heverly 1902: 271). In fact, the Sheshequin Universalist Church holds the distinction of being the sole Universalist Meeting House in Pennsylvania that has been in continual (if sometimes spotty) use since its erection in the 19th Century.

Unfortunately, the exact record of ministers serving the Sheshequin Society and the dates that they served are scant in those early years, but Heverly's history records that Rev. S. J. Gibson performed ministerial duties in the mid-1800s until the beginning of the Civil War. Thereafter it appears that various brothers of the society served the congregation including members Cheeney, Palmer, Rouse, Peebles, Gillman, Delong, Crosby, Williams, Earle, Peck and Brunning with occasional lapses when no minister was available (Heverly 1902: 273). The Proceedings of the Universalist Society of Sheshequin do record Rev. R. E. Earle and Rev. B. Browning ministering to the congregation in 1879 and 1882 respectively, but perhaps the most remarkable of ministers in Sheshequin during the last quarter of the 19th Century was Rev. Myra Kingsbury who was born in Sheshequin, December 5, 1847, and died in that village July 11, 1898. She never married, and had no children. The fact that she was ordained to the ministry by the Sheshequin Universalists in 1880 made her one of the rare female ministers in any denomination at that time. She twice served as their pastor, in 1880 and again from 1896-1898, making her total tenure at Sheshequin a bit less than three years. She spent the years between 1880 and 1896 serving a Universalist congregation in Vermont (Alderman 2006: 1). Her tenure was followed by ministers Rev. Ballow and Rev. Tellinghart in 1899 and 1900. The record of ministers at the beginning of the 20th century is sparse. Rev. James D. Herrick apparently holds the record of any minister for the Sheshequin Congregation: he served from 1914 to 1944. Coupled with Rev. John E. Trowbridge's tenure from 1968 to 1985 these men served almost half of the century. The remaining years of the 20th century are filled with ministers both lay and interim serving two or perhaps three year terms with the exception of Rev. Harry K. Means who occupied the position from 1956 to 1962. In the 21st century the present minister, Rev. Darcey Laine, is now in her fifth year of service.

Sheshequin has always had a close association with the neighboring town of Athens to the north. In 1850 the town of Athens initiated a Universalist Society and built a church which was sold in 1949 to the Christian Science denomination at which time Athens members then joined the still existing Sheshequin congregation. Ironically, the Sheshequin Universalist Church reacquired the Athens building in 1991. In 1992, the congregation, in recognition of the importance of their two locations and the significance of the merger of the Unitarian and Universalist traditions in 1961 voted to adopt the name the Unitarian Universalist Church of Athens and Sheshequin. At this time, regular Sunday worship was transferred to Athens with the Sheshequin Universalist Church being used in the summer months of July and August, a schedule which remains in place today.

Late 18th/Early 19th Century Architecture in Bradford County

The ubiquitous, rectangular log cabin or house with gabled roof was the most common structure in late 18th century Bradford County. Perhaps the best concentration of these structures was erected in French Azilum (no longer extant) in 1793 along a graceful bend of the Susquehanna River in present day Asylum Township. Although these domestic structures were crude, many had chimneys, wallpaper, window glass, shutters, and porches. The most imposing building in the colony was "La Grande Maison", a two-story log structure eighty-four feet long and sixty feet wide. It had numerous small-paned windows and eight large fireplaces. The Ackley log house in Smithfield Township and the Charles Wells house in Terry Township were also erected about this time, while the Heckewelder house, later known as the Kinsley house, in neighboring Wyalusing Township preceded Azilum and was erected in 1768. The Laporte house, built in 1836 by the son of one of the founders of Azilum, had delicately painted ceilings and interior decor reflecting the French influence, elegance, and refinement of an earlier day that was unusual for a farm house of this period.

Log construction was also the norm for the Connecticuters and others moving into the area. As land claims were established and Native Americans migrated further west, however, the desire for less rustic accommodations saw the erection of timber and clapboard dwellings. Fortunately, Penn's woods provided an abundant source of construction material so that timber (post) and clapboard construction predominated whether they reflected a particular style or were vernacular. The predominant architecture during the first half of the 19th century in Bradford County was either vernacular

or Federal, with its vault construction and fan lights (such as the Palladian window) or its close cousin, Greek Revival, with its low pitched, gable roof and post and lintel construction. Indeed, the Federal and Greek Revival styles were often blended to the point where it is difficult to assign some buildings a specific designation. These structures in general predated the Neo-Gothic, Beaux-Arts, Queen Anne, Italianate styles, and so forth, which became extremely popular during the last half of that century.

The early 19th century architectural trends in Bradford County, discussed above, can be seen in both residential and institutional architecture—such as the Abner Rockwell House, the former Athens Academy (demolished), and John Vroman, Sr. and B. Franklin Taylor's hotel (later the "Temperance House")—as well as in ecclesiastical architecture—such as the Presbyterian Church in Coryland, the Orwell Bible Church, the Baptist Church in Springfield, and the African Methodist Episcopal Church and Episcopalian Church, both in Towanda. One example of Bradford County's early 19th century residential architecture is Abner Rockwell's log house (circa 1807) in what is now Monroe Township. When Rockwell became Bradford County's first sheriff, his house was eventually expanded with a post and clapboard addition with the old log section serving as Bradford County's first jail. Eventually, the entire structure was covered with clapboard and, although it was vernacular in style, it was a forerunner of Federal architecture in the area. In terms of institutional architecture, in 1798, Noah Murray presided over the committee that chose the site for the Athens Academy which was erected in 1815 on the site of the present day Soldier's Monument Park, across the street from Spalding Memorial Library within the Athens Historic District (Bradsby 1891: 424). Rebuilt again in 1843, a contemporary rendering depicted the Academy as a two-story frame Greek Revival edifice with an elaborate bell tower. For a number of years it was the center of learning in Bradford County. One of its more famous graduates was Stephen Foster. It was demolished in 1925. A two and one-half story hotel of plank and timber construction was built in Granville Township in 1848 by John Vroman, Sr. and B. Franklin Taylor. Fronted with a two story porch supported by eight (four on each level) square pillars, it was primarily Greek Revival in design, but its somewhat steeper gable roof had elements of the Federal style. When Taylor assumed sole ownership of the building in 1852 he removed the bar and had the words TEMPERANCE HOUSE painted in bold letters across the façade of the second story porch.

In terms of early 19th century ecclesiastical architecture, an example of a vernacular wood church is the Presbyterian Church in Coryland Wells Township, which was built in 1839. Extremely plain in design it is a good example of a vernacular building with a simple bell tower above the entrance. Another wooden church, the Orwell Bible Church in Orwell Township was originally built as a Methodist Church in the late 1830s. Three bays wide and four bays deep it was a Federal style building, but in an eclectic manner it was crowned with a Neo-Gothic bell tower. It was moved several hundred feet and greatly repaired in 1951. The Baptists in Springfield Township organized in 1819 and for some years worshiped in a schoolhouse, but eventually erected a fine frame Federal edifice in 1845. African-Americans in Towanda built an extremely plain frame Greek Revival edifice in 1847 originally known as the Colored Wesleyan Methodist Church. It later became Towanda's African Methodist Episcopal Church. Unfortunately it was demolished in 1949. A precursor of the many Neo-Gothic buildings to appear in the last half of the 19th century was erected in Towanda in 1842. Despite the fact that it was a year of almost unparalleled financial difficulty and distress in the Towanda Episcopalian community, a church was completed and an organ purchased. It stood just north of the present Christ Church and was a frame structure of somewhat ponderous design crowned with a two-level, crenellated bell tower and spires placed at various corners of the structure (Bradsby 1891: 166). While frame construction predominated, some churches, such as the Presbyterian churches at Wysox and Troy were made of brick. The Wysox Presbyterian Church (originally known as the Wysox Brick Meeting House), is not far from Sheshequin. Built about 1830 it is a contemporary of the Sheshequin Meeting House and remains intact. Its façade, featuring long Romanesque windows and crowned by a domed bell tower is impressive; however, in 1960 a church education building was erected and attached to the original building which compromises its historical integrity. Troy Presbyterian Church, erected in 1848, was Greek Revival in style. Its façade had two entrance doors and each side was pierced with four tall, slender rectangular windows. The two-stage bell tower was crowned with a crenellation that gave the building an appearance of a Neo-Gothic structure mistakenly embellishing a Federal structure, a precursor of the eclectic movement so popular in the American building arts in the last half of the 19th century (Bradford County Bicentennial - A Photographic History, 2012: various township listings).

A comparison of St. Matthew's Episcopal Church in Stevens (formerly Pike) Township, the Old Burlington Methodist Church, in West Burlington Township and the Sheshequin Universalist Meeting House is of interest, for all three are three bays wide and four bays deep and of post and clapboard construction. Each, in their separate way, is a fine example of rural church architecture at the onset of the 19th century, St. Matthew's and the Meeting House representing the Federal style, while Old Burlington Church is oriented more toward the Greek Revival style. Erected in 1820, St. Matthew's is the

oldest of the three with the Old Burlington Church, built in 1822, and the Universalist Meeting House of Sheshequin, built in 1827, following close behind. The three are two level buildings having no basements. Nevertheless, all three have balconies surrounding three interior walls of the building and oriented to face the altar in the case of St. Matthew's and the pulpits in the other two. However, where the pews in St. Matthew's and the Old Burlington Church face the rear of the edifice, those in the Meeting house face the front. St. Matthew's and the Meeting House have one main entrance leading to a vestibule or narthex, while the Old Burlington Church has two exterior entrances crowned with fan lights leading directly into its vestibule. All three sanctuaries trisect the pews with two aisles. This is a bit unusual for St. Matthew's in that most Episcopal Churches would have a center aisle leading directly to the altar. On the other hand, this is precisely why the Old Burlington Church and the Meeting House would not have a center aisle, for they have no altars. The window sashes of the Old Burlington Church are all rectangular while the Meeting House and St. Matthew's Church have Palladian windows above the main entrance. Moreover, the second level windows of St. Matthew's are arched while those of the Meeting House are rectangular. The façade of the Old Burlington Church is severe in line with a plain porch roof protecting the double entrance. The facades of St. Matthew's and the Meeting House are more ornate and exhibit Federal, decorative detail. Both have Palladian widows above an entrance defined by pilasters the height of the jambs. However, where the façade of the Meeting House is boldly trisected by four pilasters, St. Matthew's is not. Both the Meeting House and St. Matthew's have niches as a focal point for the service, but where that of the Meeting House is a graceful, concave surface, much like that in a shrine, St. Matthew's is rectangular with an arched ceiling. Old Burlington Church has no bell tower, while the bell tower on St. Matthew's is lower, and plainer in design and lacks the elegance of the one on the Meeting House. Old Burlington Church is more severely and plainly wrought in both interior and exterior to the point of almost being a vernacular Greek Revival edifice, perhaps befitting John Wesley's practice of open-air ministrations which deemphasized the importance of a church as being requisite to worship. Indeed, its interior furnishings are of unfinished pine while the other two have detailed finishes. Despite its starkness of line, however, there is refinement in the curved stair case approaching each side of the raised pulpit while the curved wall behind the pulpit compliments the arc of the communion rail facing the pulpit. Contrarily, the Meeting House and St. Matthew's employ decorative devices. The Sheshequin meeting house abundantly uses bold ogee and dentil moldings and paneling that, as Milton Osborne describes in his book, *Album of American Architecture*: "like its prototypes in Connecticut, this little church has a beauty of design and detail that shows the master carpenter's touch." Moreover, neither of the other buildings exhibits the bravura use of an aedicula in combination with the vaulted ceiling. William Marvin, the architect and builder of the Universalist Meeting House came from Pike Township and had to be influenced by St. Matthew's design. In fact, the similarities between St. Matthew's and the Universalist Meeting House are so striking, that one may be tempted to attribute St. Matthew's design to William Marvin as well. Unfortunately, no record can be found to support this supposition. Nevertheless, the fact that these three churches have entered the 21st Century intact and in good historical state is a marvel.

The Universalist Meeting House of Sheshequin, erected in 1827, is one of Bradford County's exceptional extant examples of Federal architecture of that period. It exhibits the transition from the slightly severe and formal line of Georgian architecture to the freer more exuberant American Federal architectural style. The elegant exterior façade with its Palladian light above the entrance and four bold pilasters is complimented by the fine workmanship of the interior from the bold use of molding and its pews with doors, to the concave aedicula and vaulted ceiling. Its most impressive interior feature is the high pulpit that in addition to its beauty performs a utilitarian function, for any minister addressing the congregation from this pulpit had a clear view of the congregants in the balcony as well as the first level. In 1981, Wagner & Wagner, preservation consultants from Beech Creek, Pa., stated, "We find that the Universalist Church of Sheshequin is an outstanding example of the late Federal style architecture representative of the period 1790 – 1830." (Wagner & Wagner 1981:1) Finally, a February 27, 1937 article in the Daily Review, Towanda, Pennsylvania reads, "Eight Buildings in County Outstanding, Chosen as Examples of Early American Buildings to be Studied and Recorded for Posterity in Washington; Some May Be Preserved." The Universalist Meeting House of Sheshequin was one of them.

9. Major Bibliographical References

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

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Correspondence: Frank Grauman – Bohlin, Powell, Larkin, Cywinske: Architects to Lowell Patton; Aug.19, 1982.

Correspondence: Wagner & Wagner – Preservation Consultants to Lowell Patton, circa 1981.

Craft, David, *History of Bradford County Pennsylvania 1770 – 1787*; Philadelphia: L. H. Everts & Co. 1878.

Eddy Richard, *Universalism In America*; Boston: Universalist Publishing House, 1884, Vol. I.

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Murray, Louisa Wells, *A History of Old Tioga Point and Early Athens, Pennsylvania*; Wilkes Barre: Raedon Press, 1908.

Case, Thomas and Doug McMinn, "Methodist Episcopal Church of Burlington," National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, 1989.

Sawyer, C. M., *Memoir of Mrs. Julia B. Scott*; Boston: Able Tompkins, 1853.

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): N/A

Universalist Meeting House of Sheshequin
Name of Property

Bradford County, PA
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 0.4
(Do not include previously listed resource acreage.)

UTM References
(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
1	18	375545	4636922	3			
2				4			

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

The boundary corresponds to the "Universalist Meeting House of Sheshequin, Bradford County, PA, Site Plan" which is at a scale of 1" = 20'.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundary includes all resources historically associated with the Universalist Meeting House of Sheshequin. The cemetery predates the meeting house and became associated with the church only after 1827. They functioned together until 1913, at which time they were again separated.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Ben F. Olena assisted by Lowell Patton and
organization Frank Grauman & Michael Conner, architects of Bohlin Cywinski Jackson of Wilkes-Barre & Philadelphia date 9/26/12
street & number 58 Millview Park Lane telephone 570-924-3416
city or town Forksville state PA zip code 18616
e-mail bfolena@yahoo.com

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

  A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.

- **Continuation Sheets**

- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

Universalist Meeting House of Sheshequin
Name of Property

Bradford County, PA
County and State

Photographs:

The following photos taken with Canon Power ShotSX23OHS, printed on a Canon MG5300 ink jet printer using 80 lb. – high gloss paper and Canon PIXMA inks.

Name of Property: Universalist Meeting House of Sheshequin

City or Vicinity: Sheshequin Township

County: Bradford State: Pennsylvania

Photographer: Ben F. Olena

Date Photographed: 7/26/2012

Description of Photograph(s) and number:

1 of 16 front façade, looking east
2 of 16 west end (front) and north side looking southeast
3 of 16 north elevation looking south
4 of 16 southeast corner looking northwest
5 of 16 cemetery looking east
6 of 16 vestibule looking north from south
7 of 16 Sunday school above vestibule looking north
8 of 16 first level pews looking southeast
9 of 16 first level pews from balcony looking northeast
10 of 16 high pulpit looking south
11 of 16 concave niche and vaulted ceiling looking west
12 of 16 balcony pews looking east
13 of 16 niche looking southwest from balcony
14 of 16 stove looking southeast
15 of 16 palladian window looking northeast
16 of 16 stove pipe looking northeast

Property Owner:

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

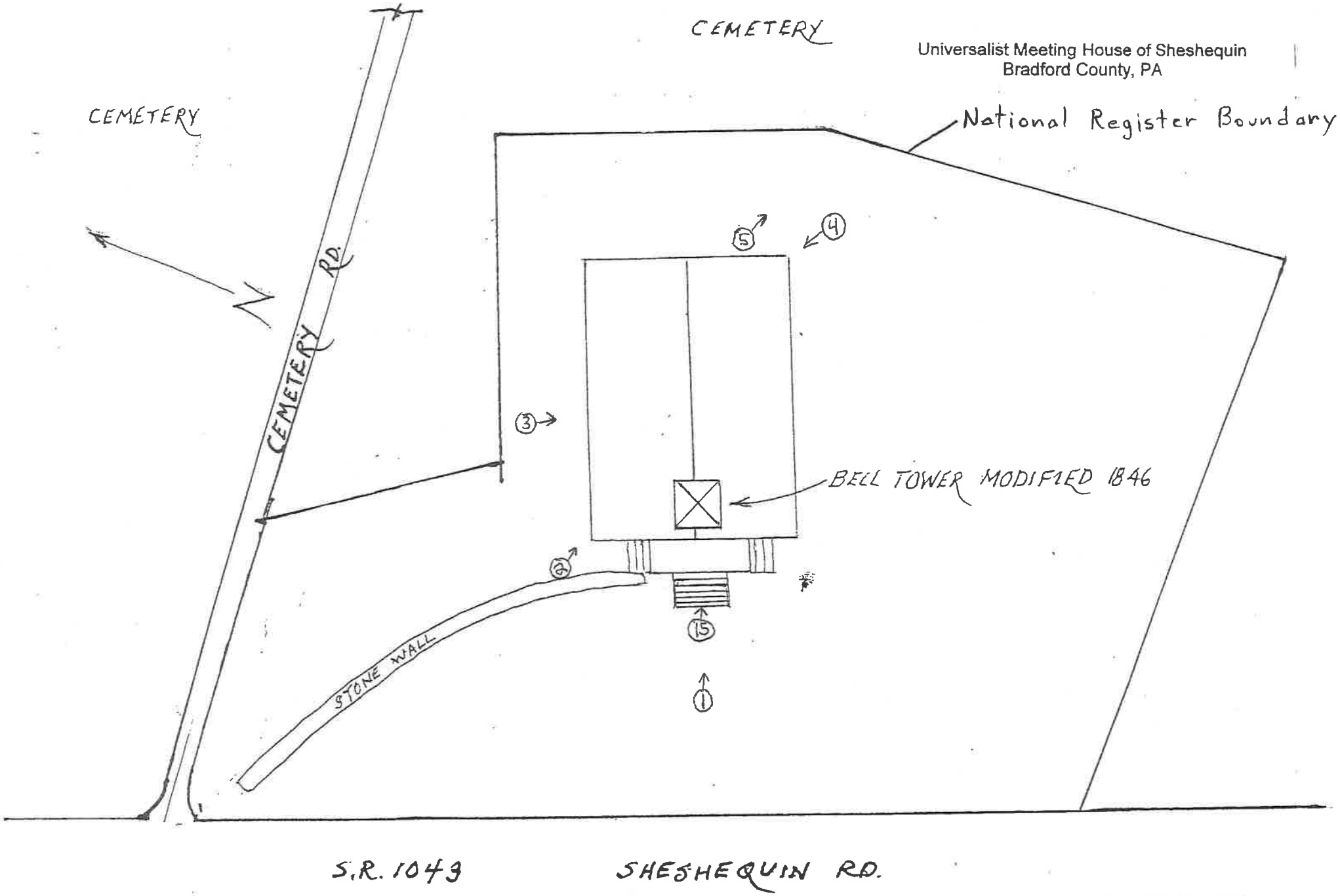
name Unitarian/Universalist Church of Athens and Sheshequin

street & number 112 North Street telephone 570-888-0252

city or town Athens state PA zip code 18810

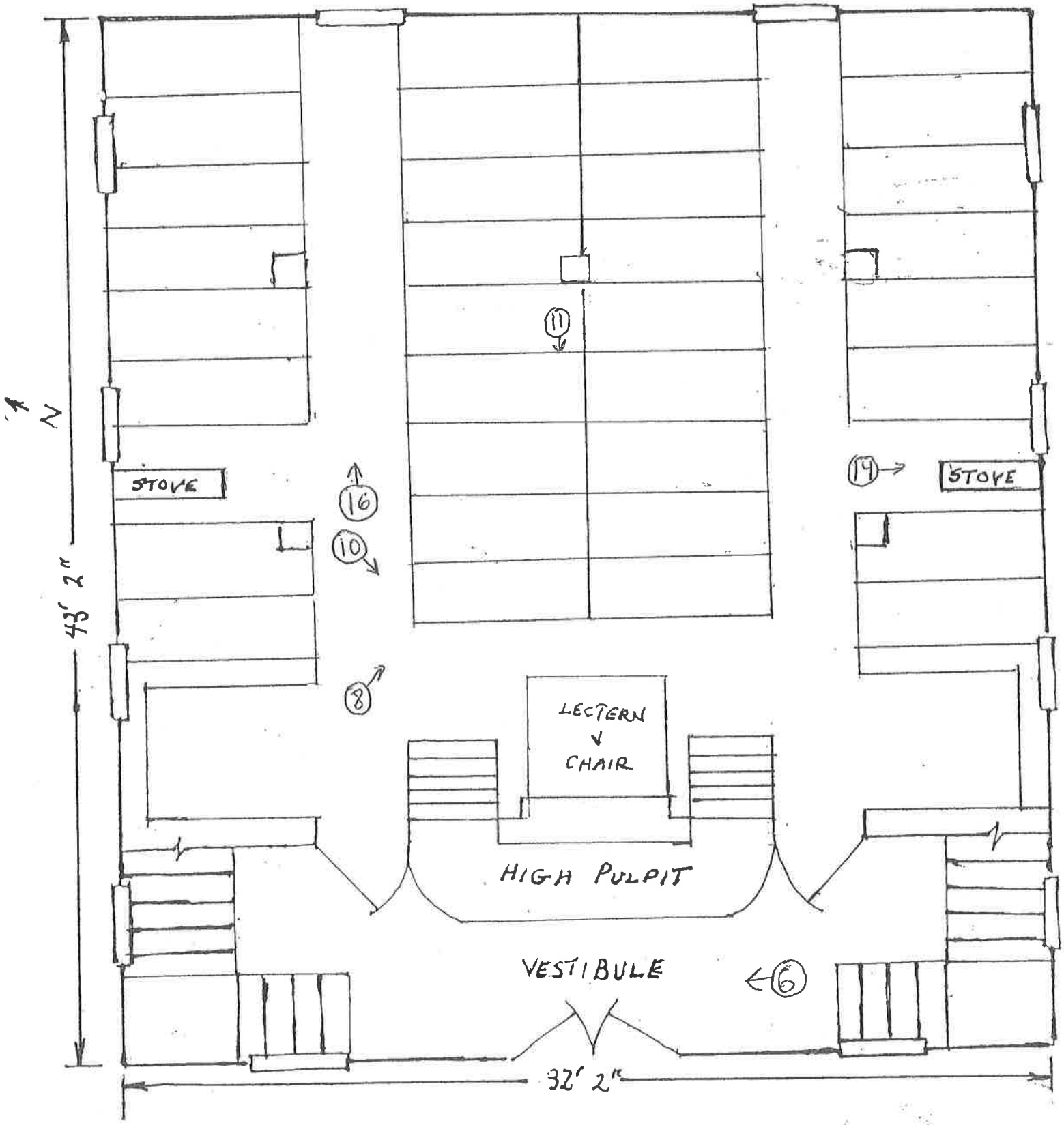
Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain 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.

Universalist Meeting House of Sheshequin
Bradford County, PA



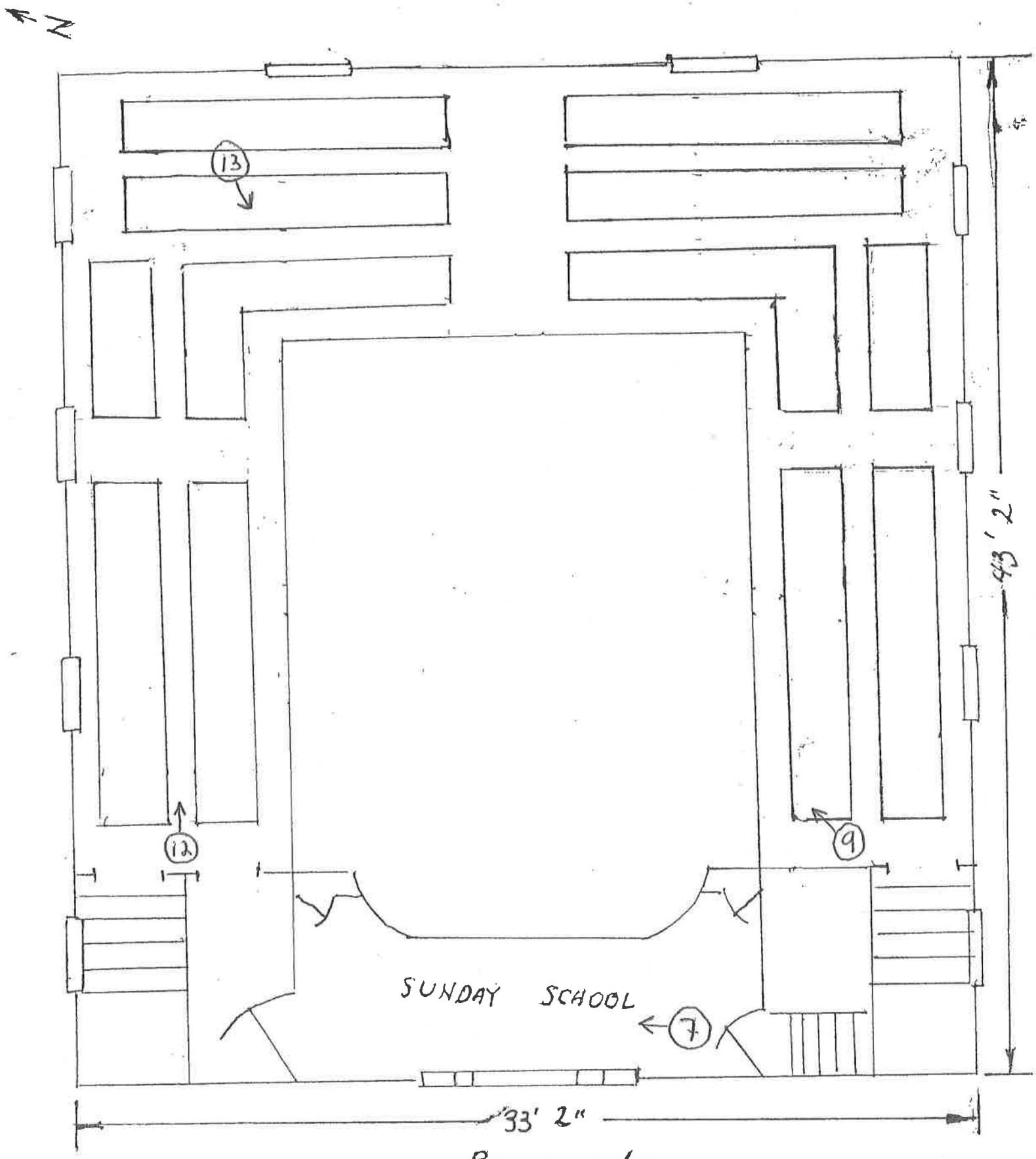
SITE PLAN

Universalist Meeting House of Sheshequin
Bradford Co., PA



LOWER LEVEL

Universalist Meeting House of Sheshequin
Bradford Co., PA



BALCONY LEVEL

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES
TOPOGRAPHIC AND GEOLOGIC SURVEY

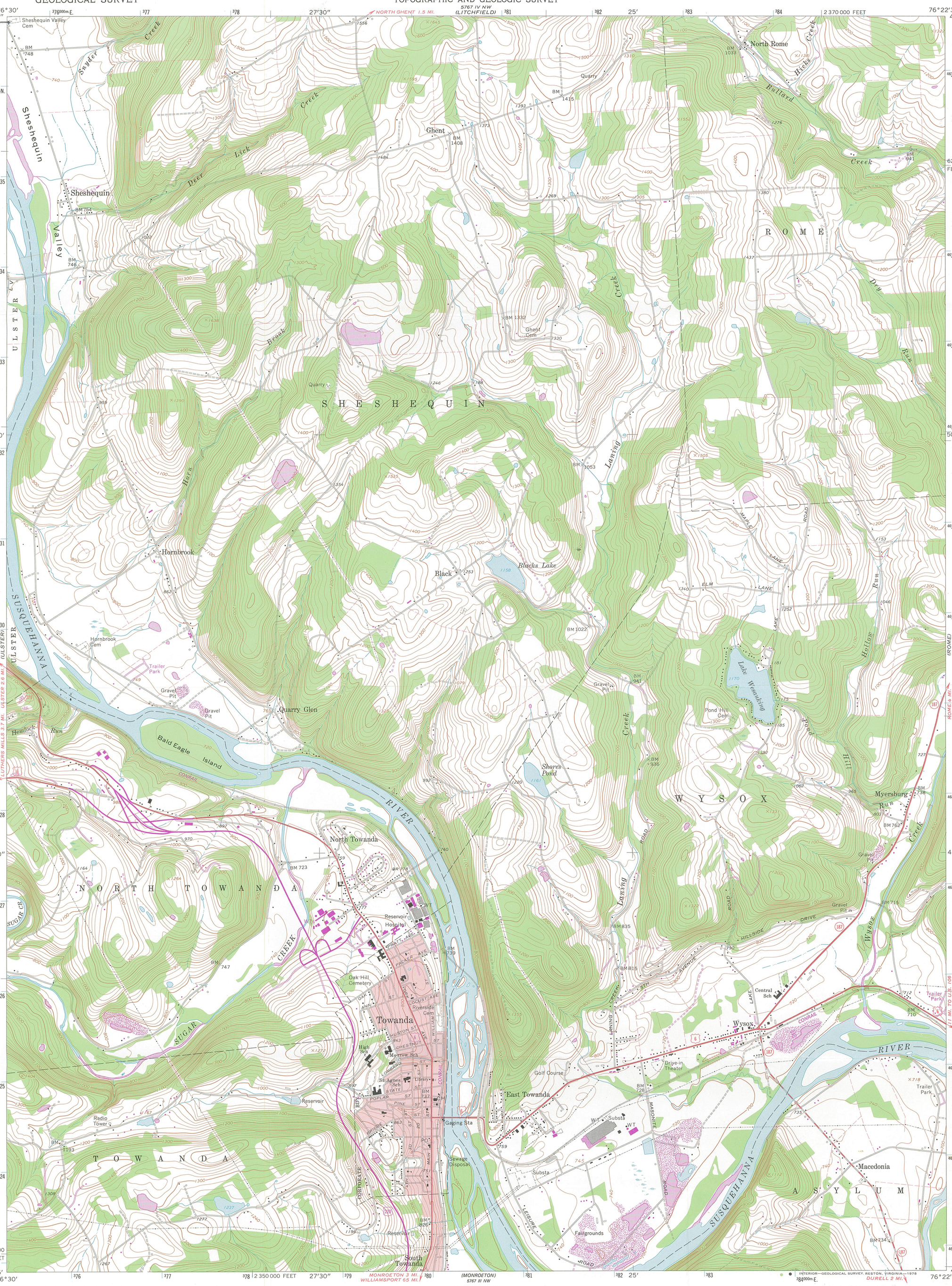
TOWANDA QUADRANGLE
PENNSYLVANIA—BRADFORD CO.
7.5 MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC)

Universalist Meeting
House of Sheshequin

Bradford County, PA

UTM Reference

18	375545	4636922
Zone	Easting	Northing



Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey

Control by USGS and USC&GS

Topography by photogrammetric methods from aerial photographs taken 1966. Field checked 1967

Polyconic projection. 1927 North American datum
10,000-foot grid based on Pennsylvania coordinate system, north zone
1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks, zone 18, shown in blue

Fine red dashed lines indicate selected fence and field lines where generally visible on aerial photographs. This information is unchecked

Red tint indicates area in which only landmark buildings are shown

Revisions shown in purple compiled in cooperation with the state of Pennsylvania agencies from aerial photographs taken 1976
This information not field checked. Map edited 1978

MN GN
10° 178 MILS
0°57′ 17 MILS
UTM GRID AND 1978 MAGNETIC NORTH DECLINATION AT CENTER OF SHEET

SCALE 1:24 000

1 ½ 0 1 MILE

1000 0 1000 2000 3000 4000 5000 6000 7000 FEET

1 .5 0 1 KILOMETER

CONTOUR INTERVAL 20 FEET
NATIONAL GEODETIC VERTICAL DATUM OF 1929

THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS
FOR SALE BY U. S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, RESTON, VIRGINIA 22092
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

PENNSYLVANIA
QUADRANGLE LOCATION

INTERIOR—GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, RESTON, VIRGINIA—1978

ROAD CLASSIFICATION

Primary highway, all weather, hard surface

Light-duty road, all weather, improved surface

Secondary highway, all weather, hard surface

Unimproved road, fair or dry weather

U. S. Route

State Route

TOWANDA, PA.

N4145—W7622.5/7.5

1967
PHOTOREVISED 1978
AMS 5767 IV SW—SERIES V831

ENTER

FISH