NPS Form 10-900

OMB No. 1024-0018

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NAT. REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

262

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

1. Name of Property

historic name Tomhannock Methodist Episcopal Church

other names/site number

2. Location

street & number Tomhannock Rd [ ] not for publication

city or town Pittstown [ ] vicinity

state New York code 083 county Rensselaer code 09 zip code

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**

Ruth A Pierpont DSHPO 4/2/14

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:)

Carol A. Beall 5.27.14

Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

5. Classification

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

	private
x	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
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	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

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)

RELIGION, religious facility

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)

GOVERNMENT, city hall

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

MID 19TH CENTURY, Greek Revival

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation: stone
walls: Brick, frame (non-historic addition)
roof: Slate, asphalt shingles (tower, addition)
other:

Narrative Description

Summary Paragraph

The Tomhannock Methodist Episcopal church exemplifies vernacular Greek Revival–style church design in rural New York during the mid–1800s. Its brick construction is somewhat less typical of such buildings as many more are framed. This choice may have indicated this building's central importance to its circuit when it was built. The church retains virtually all of its strictly symmetrical exterior design dating to its construction in 1845. Its interior retains structural evidence of a matching symmetry; later remodelings in 1871 and 1896 replaced or concealed earlier decorative finishes while retaining the essential symmetry of plan. Further alterations in the twentieth century enclosed the balcony and may also have set off the vestibule from an earlier single–room plan. A two–story ell post–dating the historic period replaced older social rooms added to back wall of the main church in 1855. The church was abandoned by the United Methodist Conference in 2010, and the

Town of Pittstown purchased the building a few years later. The town plans to keep and further restore the historic section of the building, while the back ell is being remodeled for municipal functions.

Narrative Description

The Tomhannock Methodist Episcopal church is located on a 2.67–acre L–plan lot at the center of the hamlet of Tomhannock in Pittstown in Rensselaer County, New York. The highway is lined on both sides by frame houses built mainly in the Greek Revival style and set close to the road on lots with fairly narrow frontages. The church shares a similar setback with other buildings on the north side of the highway. The former Methodist parsonage stands on the adjacent lot west of the church. Five mature locust trees shade its front, or south, façade. A smaller one–and–a–half–story frame house with very plain finishes is located east of the church. A modular frame house stands directly opposite the church. Larger, more stylish Greek Revival–style houses flank this newer dwelling.

The church lot drops off steeply just beyond the back, or north, wall of the original brick building to a narrow flat area extending to the bank of Otter Creek. This slope appears to have been partially excavated to construct the poured concrete foundation that supports the single–story frame hyphen that connects a large two–story frame addition (built ca.1980). The lower story of the addition is a full story below the grade of the church and the connecting hyphen. The gabled roofs of both sections continue the north–south axis of the church roof. From street level, the addition appears to be a single story in height, but when viewed obliquely, the lower level is visible. A parking area adjoins the east side of the church at street grade, and a drive descends to a second parking area and the entrance to the addition on the lower level. A ramp built of dimensional pressure–treated lumber accesses the upper story of the addition, which continues the floor level of the brick church. The church has recently been acquired by the town, which plans to use it as a meeting hall and offices. The brick section retains the appearance and furnishings dating to its use as a church; the non-historic ca. 1980 wood frame addition is presently being remodeled as office space.

The main church preserves its early appearance as a vernacular Greek Revival–style church of the mid–nineteenth century. The frontal–gable, rectangular–plan (approx. 39’ x 56’6” on the exterior) building has unpainted brick walls. The side and back walls are laid up in a variation of common bond with header rows every ten courses. The front façade is articulated by four brick pilasters, a brick frieze, and a brick tympanum all laid up in stretcher bond. The pilasters have plain brownstone capitals resting on prominent flattened ogee moldings of the same material. These wrap to the sides of the church where they are matched by ones at the north ends of the side walls. The latter pilasters do not wrap to the back, or north, wall of the building. The foundation on the front of the building is faced with large rectangular slabs of slate; the side and back walls rest on randomly laid up mortared fieldstone walls. A dressed gray limestone water table caps the foundation on all four sides. A wide pavement of poured concrete slabs runs in a straight line from the highway to the center entrance. Soil is gently graded away on each side of the walk and partially covers the slate facing stones on the foundation. The main block is roofed in gray slate with a narrow decorative band composed of a single course of red slate flanked by single courses of light grayish–green slate. A small brick chimney is centered on the back wall rising above the ridgeline.

The brick church retains the strict symmetry typical of Greek Revival–style churches constructed in the mid–1800s throughout the region. A simple elliptical fanlight with a curving brownstone lintel and flat sill is centered in the brick tympanum. The roof cornice incorporates a brick frieze six courses deep on the sides and front. On the sides, the wood bed molding of the roof trim rests on the frieze. On the front, wood partial returns are located at the corners above the brick frieze, and four courses of brick that appear to be softer and,

thus noticeably weathered, span the distance between the returns. An historic photograph printed in the centennial program shows that the partial returns are a change and replace a wood full return that once spanned the façade above the brick frieze. In addition to the horizontal frieze, a second brick frieze—its lower edge made of a single row of bricks set on end—follows the rake on the front façade. On the back, or north, wall of the church, the wood cornice trim and partial returns wrap the back of the building. The wood trim is encased in aluminum and vinyl. A section of this cladding on the back cornice is gone and reveals that the metal was carefully shaped in an effort to replicate the appearance of the original material underneath.

The windows, one located in each of the side bays of the front façade and three more evenly spaced on each side wall, are identical square–headed paired openings with wood casings and brownstone lintels and sills. The latter match in material the capitals of the pilasters. The casings are plain save for a single fillet molding along the corner edge of each opening. The wood sash appear to be constructed of hard wood, varnished on the interior and painted white on the exterior. The molding profile is a shallow single ogee characteristic of the last third of the nineteenth century. Each window is composed of two vertically stacked lights, now glazed with clear textured glass in a variety of patterns typical of the mid–1900s, and double hung with sash weights. Delicate brash sash locks and pulls complete the window furniture.

The center entrance in the front façade is a plain, square–headed opening with a wood casing. It retains recently replaced paired wood doors with paired panels similar in configuration to the doors in the opening between the vestibule and auditorium of the church. The wood transom with two panels placed side by side and spanning the space above the door and below the brownstone lintel retains moldings characteristic of the latter part of the nineteenth century. The plain casing with simple fillet moldings at the corner edges, however, is identical to those of the windows. In the upper–story space above the door and between the windows is a white marble panel; carved in block letters with serifs, it reads, "Tomhannock Methodist/Episcopal Church/1845." Its top edge aligns with the wood casings of the flanking windows.

A two–stage frame tower capped by an open belfry is located directly above the entrance. The stages, barely different in dimensions from each other, are clad in vinyl siding. The belfry roof is supported by square posts clad in aluminum shaped to suggests that the metal covers plain square Doric capitals; heavy corner braces reinforce the open sides where the single bell mounted on a wheel hangs. A small, four–light window in the north, or back, wall of the tower lights the inside of the tower. A low pyramidal roof with flared eaves and asphalt shingles rests atop the belfry.

The paired doors open onto a shallow vestibule spanning much of the front, or south, wall of the building. The east and west ends are walled off by wood panel walls clad in narrow (1¼") varnished beadboard. The east end houses a closet; the west end encloses a wood stair with a wind at the bottom. The walls and ceiling of the vestibule are also clad in narrow beadboard and the floor is carpeted. The closet at the east end retains evidence of a staircase matching the one at the west end, with walls plastered above the trim and paint ghosts of the treads and risers on the interior wall. The plaster is troweled over mill lath on the interior walls and directly onto the brick exterior walls. The stairs on the west wall are reached through a six–panel wood door in a wood panel wall. This door appears to occupy its original position opening one riser above floor level; the door opening into the closet at the other end has been lowered to floor level. The stairs, the side of the door facing the stairs, and the railing all retain graining characteristic of the third quarter of the nineteenth century. The vestibule sides of both doors have been clumsily stripped and refinished, apparently in attempt to match the darker varnish of the beadboard and the doors entering the main part of the church.

The west stair accesses a balcony closed off from the church by a recently built wall framed using dimensional 2 x 4 lumber and clad in homosote. The stairwell is protected by a low railing supported by widely

spaced turned spindles and terminating in a heavy turned newel post. At the east end, the location where the stairs rose is floored over. At both ends, ghosts of hinges, apparently from earlier trap doors, can be traced on the wide floorboards. The balcony is lit by the top halves of the front windows of the church, and the floor aligns with the meeting rails of the sash. The walls are wainscoted with unpainted beadboard, and the plaster above has been removed. Thus, the brick exterior walls and the framing for a deeply coved ceiling are exposed.

The belfry opens directly above the center of the balcony. The roof system is constructed entirely of up–and–down sawn lumber with butted rafters except for the hewn plates running the length of each side wall. A much heavier rafter, constituting the top chord of a king-post truss and tied with a wrought iron elbow at the peak, is centered over each of the three bays. Angled braces meet at the center of the sawn crossbeams marking the bays, and vertical iron rods connect the junction of the braces with the heavy rafters. These three wood and iron trusses allow the entire width of the building to be supported on the outside walls so there are no obstructing columns in the main section of the church.

It appears that the belfry is a later change, but its construction using hewn timber for all but the braces indicates that it may be older than the church. A hole was cut in the roof to allow the first stage of the tower to rest directly on the crossbeams of the roof framing. It is shimmed (although it no longer seems level) and does not appear to be joined to the structure. There is no reinforcement to the frame to support the added weight of the belfry and its bell.

The church's auditorium is a single, nearly square room lit by the three pairs of windows in the side walls. It plainly finished with ivory–painted walls and varnished wood trim. The paired windows terminate at a varnished chair rail capping a matching beadboard wainscot. The walls rise to a place just below the line of the meeting rails of the sash, where the wall steps outward approximately six inches. A prominent sloping varnished wood molding paralleling the chair rail and running along the side walls caps this step. A third, heavier molding runs around the side and front walls at the base of the deeply coved ceiling. A large plain wood medallion is centered on the ceiling. Its finish appears to match the recent refinishing of the six–panel doors. Two smaller, later medallions are placed north and south of the large one. Recently added electric fans are suspended from the center of each these. Three electric light fixtures, which appear to be sized for a domestic space rather than a large public one, hang from the ceiling, one from the center of the largest medallion. The square–headed windows are simply trimmed in a varnished wood molding composed of two fascia enclosed by a simple ogee. These match the casings of the door from the vestibule into the church and the doors in the north wall flanking the raised, semi–circular dais at the front of the church.

The dais is set off by a curving balustrade with vase finials set on the posts at each end. The curving front edge of the dais is dressed in a hardwood molding matching in character the other such finishes in the church. It appears the dais was enlarged about a foot during a renovation: this is marked by a smaller hardwood arc set about a foot within the current one. The dais extends into the northwest corner in a separate lobe, where a small organ was placed. Evidence of two earlier wall finishes survives above the chair rail above the dais. Late Victorian-era wallpaper, now painted over, is laid over paint brushed directly on the plaster. The bottom two inches of the latter finish reveal alternating narrow black and white parallelograms that appear to angle towards a central point and are flanked by fields painted brick red. It appears that the wallpaper covers more of the painting, which may depict an architectural setting with a tiled floor. It may be that the walls framed out above the wainscot on the east and west sides of the church hide additional decorative paint finishes dating this early, possibly original, scheme.

The church is furnished with folding auditorium chairs fixed to the floor. These have cast iron supports labeled "Grand Rapids School Furn. Co.," curved plywood seats and backs pierced with a five–pointed star within

a circle, and wood armrests. They are arranged in an arc with a center aisle and two side aisles radiating from the dais in the center front, or north end, of the hall. The chairs are numbered but not arranged in numerical order. The carpeted floor slopes slightly toward the altar.

The non-historic frame addition is undergoing renovation as the large open spaces of the older social rooms are converted into offices, small meeting rooms, and amenities. From the lower level, the floor framing of the church is visible and, like the roof framing, the longer members running from front to back are hand hewn. The fairly wide but regular floor boards run east–west. The church building rests on a massive and deep fieldstone foundation which affords a full–height basement underneath the entire footprint. The carpeting in the main compartment of the church conceals the details of gently sloping floor laid over the older level one visible from below.

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 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 that 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 boxes that apply.)

[ ] **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 of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years

Areas of Significance:
(Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance:

1845–1896

Significant Dates:

1845, 1871, 1896

Significant Person:

N/A

Cultural Affiliation:

N/A

Architect/Builder:

Brown, Roswell; mason (1845)

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph

The former Tomhannock Methodist Episcopal church is architecturally significant under Criterion C as an intact and representative example of vernacular Greek Revival–style church design in rural Rensselaer County, New York. The church retains a highly intact and well–proportioned, if rather plain, exterior decorative scheme using brick, three types of stone excluding the slate roof, and wood. The interior retains much of the form and structure of the original construction period in 1845 with alterations carried out in 1871 and 1896. Repairs undertaken in 1927 introduced further superficial alterations. The original social rooms constructed in 1855 to the rear of the building were replaced ca.1980 with a two–story frame addition built partially on land acquired from the neighboring property on the east boundary. This section will soon house town offices and meeting rooms.

Narrative Statement of Significance

The Methodist Episcopal Church was officially organized in America at the Baltimore Christmas Conference in 1784.[1] The sect's roots lie primarily in Anglicanism, or the Church of England. It has its genesis with a group of students at Oxford University in the 1720s, who felt called to help those marginalized and often overlooked by the established church, among them workers in the growing industrial centers, convicts, and the very poor. John Wesley (1703–1791) and his younger brother Charles (1707–1788) are the names most associated with what would become Methodism later in the century. The Wesleys embraced Arminianism, a belief that all people could attain salvation promulgated by the Dutch theologian Jacobus Arminius (1560–1609). This belief was considered heretical by traditional Calvinists—among them Puritans and later Presbyterians. Arminism, became a central tenet of the new sect that emerged. Its name, "Methodism," was first applied as a taunt, but John Wesley defanged the taunt by adopting it as his own.

The structure of the new sect was codified in America soon after the Revolution, a time when few Anglican ministers remained in the former colonies. The Methodist Episcopal church adopted much of the structure and especially the liturgy of the Anglican church, but it allowed lay people to act as ministers and leaders of classes rather than requiring ordained ministers to preside over meetings. This eased the establishment of religious societies in remote, sparsely populated places where roads were poor, the work of farming all-consuming, and ordained ministers rare. The relatively unstructured nature of church hierarchy allowed for small societies in numerous locations, and Methodist Episcopalianism rapidly became popular in frontier regions in the post–Revolutionary period. They often met in houses, barns, and in the open air. As an example of the popularity of Methodism, during the first half of the nineteenth century, at least eight Methodist Episcopal churches were organized in Pittstown alone.[2]

Sources disagree in some details about the beginnings of Methodism in Pittstown, but in broad strokes they are largely similar.[3] Reputedly, Darius Dunham preached the first Methodist sermon in the area in 1789 when he was *en route* to a newly formed society on the Cambridge Circuit at Ashgrove about 20 miles distant. By 1791, Tomhannock gained its own preaching appointment. People gathered for services at the home of Samuel Rowland, and his record of preachers' pay is used to support the claim that that was the beginning of the Tomhannock society.[4]

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[1] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Wesley; http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Methodist_Episcopal_Church. These entries in Wikipedia provide basic information about these topics. The United Methodist Church site, www.umc.org provides information about the relationships between the United Brethren, a largely German sect founded by Philip William Otterbein (1726–1813) and Martin Boehm (1725–1812), and the Evangelical Association established by Jacob Albright (1759–1808). These sects joined the Methodist Episcopal church to form the United Methodist Conference in 1968.

[2] Arthur James Weise, *The City of Troy and Its Vicinity* (Troy, New York: Edward Green, 1886): 93–4. (http://www.googlebooks.com).

[3] These include a sermon preached by Rev. J.G. Gooding, "Celebrating the Centennial of Methodism in Pittstown" preached at the Tomhannock Methodist Episcopal Church 27 October 1891 (reprinted in the *Pittstown Historical Society Newsletter* in Fall 2007), an essay written at the centennial of the church construction in 1945, and a paper by Rev. Everett Hughes written in 1984 to aid in fundraising to repair the church. None of these presented citations *per se*, but Gooding's sermon refers to primary sources. Being closest in time to the events in question may make Gooding doubly the most reliable. The 1945 essay states that Lemuel Smith preached *en route* to Ashgrove, but this appears to be an error.

[4] Gooding, 9. Smith was, according to Gooding, the first pastor at Ashgrove and Dunham the second, who found himself in Pittstown that evening in 1789.

The hamlet of Tomhannock was known early on as Reed's Hollow for Joseph Reed's tavern, built in 1805.[5] The 1854 Rogerson *Map of Rensselaer County* shows two millponds in the vicinity of the hamlet and a densely packed row of houses. Its location on the creek and the Northern Turnpike opened about 1800 led to its early development as a local service center as well as a gathering place for religious observance. The turnpike connected the Hudson River and towns in southwestern Vermont in the early nineteenth century. Writing in 1880, N.B. Sylvester noted that although not at the center of Pittstown, Tomhannock was "more easily reached than any other [place] from all parts of the town and by common consent town meetings have been held here for about 70 years."[6] They still are today.

During the 1790s and early 1800s, Methodist Episcopal societies at Cooksboro (formed 1791) and Schaghticoke (formed 1789) were part of the Cambridge (New York) Circuit.[7] Tomhannock soon also became a "preaching place" on the Cambridge Circuit, and in 1794 its class numbered 15. This number had dropped to eight two years later, and then to five during the years between 1798 and 1801.[8] In 1810, Pittstown was assigned the Reverend Thomas Skeel, who lived in Hoosic, as its circuit rider through the efforts of Simon Newcomb, Jr.[9] Under Skeel's leadership, the class was reorganized on the 3rd of February 1811, and the society's numbers rapidly swelled to more than 100.[10] Such a crowd could hardly be accommodated in the Tomhannock school, and buoyed by their success, the society inaugurated a subscription fund two weeks later on 18 February 1811 to build a church. Names on the donor list included Newcomb, Snider, Reed, Wallace, Stover, Anderson, Follit, Williams, Putnam, Harrington, Gifford, Carpenter, Brundige, Brownell, Yates, Weatherwax, Akin, Filkins, Wiley, Banker, Norton, and Anders.[11] By the end of the year they had built one at a cost of $1,000.[12] The deed for the three–quarter acre (6 rods or 99 feet x 9 rods or 149.5 feet) parcel previously owned by Solomon Tinsler in the hamlet of Tomhannock, on the north side of the turnpike where the new building stood, was executed on the 18th of March in 1812.[13]

The 1811 church was a frame structure and had the luxury of a stove and piping paid for by a special subscription of $48.50, which was raised by the church women.[14] There was a parsonage "located near the corner of a woods," but a log cabin south of the village replaced this first house early on.[15] In June 1818, the church

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[5] George Baker Anderson, "History of Pittstown, New York", from *Landmarks of Rensselaer County* (Syracuse, New York: D. Mason, 1897). Found at http://history.rays-place.com/ny/ren-ipttstown-ny.htm.

[6] Nathaniel Bartlett Sylvester, *History of Rensselaer County, New York, with illustrations and biographical sketches of its prominent men and pioneers* (Philadelphia: Everts and Peck, 1880): 476.

[7] Gooding, 10.

[8] Gooding, 10. He cites Cambridge Circuit records for these figures.

[9] Everett Hughes, "Historic Tomhannock Church Plans Major Reconstruction," [1984]. Typescript provided by Paul Wiley, Pittstown, New York.

[10] Gooding, 11.

[11] Hughes. These names can be located on historic maps through the nineteenth century and in deeds for individual properties in a five-mile radius of Tomhannock. A number of these surnames are also associated with the Pittstown Society of Friends, but without Christian names provided, it is difficult to determine which households were associated with the different groups and how fluid was the shift between sects. Also of interest, the list includes names representing different ethnic groups in the town—New Englanders, Dutch, and German.

[12] "History of Methodism in Tomhannock," *The One Hundredth Anniversary of the Building of the Tomhannock Methodist Church, Tommhannock, New York. 1845–1945*: [1945]. This leaflet appears to have been written with reference to a minutes book of the church, but the whereabouts of this source is unfortunately unknown. Photocopy provided by Paul Wiley, Pittstown, New York.

[13] *Book of Deeds* 6/73.

[14] Hughes.

[15] "History of Methodism in Tomhannock," 1945.

acquired a larger parcel (3.93 acres) from Elihu Hoag for $150.[16] The deed descriptions shows that this lot was some distance off the main road, and in May 1823, the trustees bought the lot adjacent to the west boundary of the church lot in the hamlet from Hewlitt and Martha Hoag for $500. This half-acre parcel encompassing a house and a shop became the parsonage lot.[17] Hoag had bought the house and shop lot a few months earlier from Charles and Abigail Hoag for only $400,[18] and only paid the church $300 for the larger, more distant lot, which probably indicates a trade to allow the parson to be closer to the church.[19] By 1814, the Tomhannock church was the center of the recently established Pittstown Circuit and provided the home for the circuit preacher, who served churches in Cooksboro, Schaghticoke, Pittstown, and Millertown.[20] In 1843, the church bought from Mynard and Phebe Groesbeck the 1.5-acre lot farther east on the Northern Turnpike for use as a graveyard.[21]

In 1845, the trustees of the Tomhannock Methodist Episcopal church undertook replacing the 1811 building. No source provides a reason. Everett Hughes, pastor in 1964, suggested that the old church burned because early records appeared not to survive.[22] The centennial leaflet prepared in 1945 appears, however, to refer to a minutes book with information predating the new church and does not mention a fire, which would surely have been a momentous event for the society. A fire might, however, explain the use of brick—an unusual material for constructing a building in Pittstown—for its replacement in 1845. But, equally, the Tomhannock church was the central church of the circuit, and it may have seemed appropriate to build this important edifice of a material suggesting both permanence and competence in an area where frame buildings were typical.

The society raised $3,300 through subscriptions, the largest individual donation being $300. Roswell Brown was retained for the masonry work at $1,200. Two men from Cambridge did the carpentry for $1,400. Presumably, Brown's work included the brick walls and the limestone and brownstone trimmings. The carpenters would have built the roof, laid the floor, and probably also framed the deep cove for the ceiling. Their work totaled $2,600, presumably leaving plastering and possibly pews to be paid for separately. Wood pews would have been the typical furnishing at this period; they may have been reused from the 1811 building.[23] The balcony is also in question. Balconies were characteristic features of rural vernacular churches throughout the region in this period. The grained six-panel doors to the stair closets at each end of the vestibule could be appropriate for 1845, but the turned newel post and spindled railing enclosing the surviving stair are more typical of the 1870s or 1880s. The mill lath supporting the plaster applied to the wood panel walls enclosing the closets also seems later than 1845. The centennial leaflet mentions two renovations in the latter part of the nineteenth century, and these finishes could date to one or both of these episodes.

The centennial leaflet also states that the 1845 subscription figures did not include the steeple, "which was extra." The tower appears to be an alteration made by inserting, between the first and second of the four trusses, the frame of an older tower with fairly tall, slender proportions constructed using hewn timber. The lighter rafters of the original roof appear to be simply cut rather than framed to support the tower placement, and the proportions of the tower itself appear to be truncated as only a few feet of its lowest stage projects above the

[16] *7*/368.
[17] *11*/22.
[18] *11*/20
[19] *15*/359.
[20] Marie Stanley, "Historic church looks to the future," *The Sunday Record* (22 April 1964). Photocopy provided by Paul Wiley, Pittstown, New York. Everett Hughes provides the date 1814.
[21] 61/375.
[22] Stanley.
[23] Ghosts of their placement might be revealed if the 1845 floorboards are exposed. These appear to remain in place under the later sloping floor, as they can be viewed from the basement.

roofline. Its frame indicates that it was designed with a fairly tall first stage that projected well above the roof of the building for which it was constructed. Possibly the tower framing was salvaged from the 1811 church, or it might have been drawn from a different church that was demolished or remodeled in the 1850s. Hughes states that the bell cost $553.87, but it is unclear whether the tower preceded its purchase. It seems most likely that the old tower was added to provide a place for the new bell.

In 1855, the trustees added social rooms to the back, or north, wall of the church at a cost of $626.[24] The two doors in the north wall flanking the dais at the front of the church—preserving the strict symmetry of the building—were probably cut to allow access between the main church and the new rooms. The eastern one of these openings retains a six-panel door matching those accessing the staircase and closet in the vestibule; the western opening has lost its period door.[25] On the exterior of the north wall, a remnant of metal flashing located about halfway up the upper story of the building marks the height of the shed roof that extended over these rooms. The land directly behind the church was apparently excavated and removed to accommodate the foundation of the more recent (1980s) two-story back addition that replaced the 1855 rooms.

Two episodes of repair and refurnishing of the Tomhannock Methodist Episcopal church are noted during the nineteenth century. In 1871, $1,188 was spent on "repair and refurnishing." The six-panel doors; the balustrade and newel post on the west stair; and the wood transom over the front entrance may date to this time. The slate roof with its restrained polychromy may also have been put on. Many buildings in the Pittstown area received slate roofs in the 1870s and 1880s, when improved travel corridors, especially railroads, led many in Pittstown to replace older roofs in this period with durable slate quarried in southwestern Vermont and Washington County, New York.

A quarter-century later, in 1896, a building committee raised $2,100 and redecorated the interior of the church. Much of the trim scheme—the beadboard wainscoting, the paired doors entering the main church from the vestibule, and the window sash with their varnished interiors and late Victorian hardware—appear to date to this phase of work. The wallpaper—now painted over—probably also dates to this period. There may be different patterns used on different sections of the wall set off by the horizontal bands of wood trim above the wainscot. The seating built by the Grand Rapids School Furniture Company, which was founded in Michigan in 1886 and merged under a new name in 1899, may have been bought at this time.[26] If so, the slightly raised floor and possibly the first carpet, were probably also part of this remodel. It is possible that, until 1896, there was no vestibule, and that until then the paired entrance doors in the south wall opened directly into the main body of the church. People entering the church would have passed under the open balcony supported by columns. This might explain the ungainly framing of the small chambers at each end of the vestibule that partially overlap the windows in the front façade. The beadboard finish of the vestibule is appropriate for this period. As repair and renovation is undertaken, details might be revealed that clarify the chronology of these alterations. The three Gothic chairs still in the church appear to be those donated by the pastor at this time.[27]

Based on these expenditures made improving church property through the latter part of the nineteenth century, it appears that the congregation was fairly prosperous. The centennial leaflet also records a number of donations apparently gathered from the Tomhannock congregation for nearby churches and causes farther afield, including missionary offerings and extension work. The hamlet economy changed in the period after the

[24] "History of Methodism in Tomhannock," 1945. Hughes provides the dollar figure.

[25] As of this writing, the town plans to widen the eastern doorway to allow level access between the church section and the rooms in the back section.

[26] http://www.furniturecityhistory.org/company/3360/american-seating-co and http://americanseating.com/about-us/our-history/ provide information about this company.

[27] "History of Methodism in Tomhannock," 1945.

damming of the Tomhannock Creek in the early 1900s. This action submerged the farms of a number of parishioners, who moved away, and also diminished the importance of the old Northern Turnpike, now Otter Creek Road, as a through road. The reservoir severed the highway, shifting traffic south onto the old MacAdam Road, now adopted as NY 7, and north to the Hoosick Valley.

In 1927, repairs were again undertaken. Broken slates on the main roof were replaced. The steeple was reshingled. Its low, pyramidal roof with flared eaves may also date to these repairs, as its form seems more in keeping with that period than the mid–1800s. Other exterior repairs included work on the chimneys and trim painting. The centennial leaflet also states that the interior was "redecorated" and the pews refinished. It is unclear whether "pews" refers to the current auditorium seating or earlier wood pews, but it seems there were no further references to seating in the source used to compile the centennial leaflet. The heavy balustrade spanning the balcony may date to this episode.

With the exception of the wall built behind the balustrade of the balcony closing it off from the main section of the church, it appears little has changed since the 1927 repairs were completed save for putting in electric lights. There are three recently purchased fixtures hung on chains from the ceiling, one from the center of the large medallion, which appears to date to the nineteenth century, and two near by. These appear to be quite recent additions.

In common with many rural areas where population was declining and fewer people attended church, the Tomhannock congregation was shrinking by the mid-twentieth century. The pastor in 1944 surveyed the area and found there were 24 Methodist families in Tomhannock. Some time before, the parsonage was rented out rather than used by a resident minister. In 1960, the Tomhannock Methodist Episcopal Society sold the house and its lot to Charles and Jean Herrington.[28] During the 1980s, the church acquired the adjacent lot on the east side. This extends north to Otter Creek. This acquisition allowed extra space behind the church and old social rooms, and during that decade, the old rooms were replaced with the current two–story back addition. The purchase also afforded land for the two–level parking area with sections at road grade and one story below. During the same period, the paired front doors of the church were replaced with new wood doors. Their panel configuration is very similar to the doors between the vestibule and the church, which appear to date to the 1896 renovations.

By 1991, the average attendance at church services had dropped to just 10 people. In May 2010, the Troy Conference of the United Methodist Church declared the Tomhannock church abandoned and recommended that the building and its associated land be put up for sale. The Town of Pittstown purchased the property in 2012 with the intention of using it for town offices and meeting space. As of this writing, the back addition has been remodeled for this purpose. The original church retains interior finishes dating mainly to the latter part of the nineteenth century; its exterior is largely unchanged from its construction in 1845. The only very obvious exterior alteration is the late nineteenth–century sash, which probably replace triple– or quadruple– hung sash with smaller, more numerous lights.

The church's original design strongly relates it to a tradition of rural Protestant meetinghouses; its self-contained form, restrained detail, and interior space given over almost entirely to an auditorium—where natural lighting and clear sightlines were preeminent concerns when the church was first built— are expressive of this tradition. The use of brick and cut-stone dressings lent the building an added measure of durability and permanence in strong contrast to the frame houses of worship more characteristic of this immediate region. It also provided for a sense of solidity that reinforced the classical motives of the Greek Revival style. The building is a notable example in that context, given the use of fully articulated pilasters as part of the exterior composition.

[28] *1082/306.*

As for the elliptical fanlight that punctuates the tympanum, it is a holdover feature expressive of an earlier phase of classically inspired design.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Anderson, George Baker. "History of Pittstown, New York", from *Landmarks of Rensselaer County* (Syracuse, New York: D. Mason, 1897). Found at http://history.rays-place.com/ny/ren-ipttstown-ny.htm.

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"History of Methodism in Tomhannock," *The One Hundredth Anniversary of the Building of the Tomhannock Methodist Church, Tommhannock, New York. 1845–1945*: [Leaflet published for centennial as program for service, 1945].

Hughes, Everett. "Historic Tomhannock Church Plans Major Reconstruction," [1984]. Typescript provided by Paul Wiley, Pittstown, New York.

Sylvester, Nathaniel Bartlett. *History of Rensselaer County, New York, with illustrations and biographical sketches of its prominent men and pioneers.* Philadelphia: Everts and Peck, 1880.

Weise, Arthur James. *The City of Troy and Its Vicinity.* Troy, New York: Edward Green, 1886. (http://www.googlebooks.com)

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:

_x_State Historic Preservation Office
____Other State agency
____Federal agency
____Local government
____University
____Other
Name of repository: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 2.67 acres
(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**	**618607**	**4747345**	3			
2				4			

Verbal Boundary Description
The boundary is shown on the two enclosed maps; these were drawn at a scale of 1:24,000 and 1: 6.000.

Boundary Justification

The boundary follows that of the present parcel (tax parcel no. 43–1–9), which encompasses the church.
For much of its history, the church was associated with the house on the next lot to the immediate west, which was used as a parsonage until the 1930s. This house and its associated lot were sold in 1960 and the house has since been significantly renovated; it is not included within the nomination boundary.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Jessie A. Ravage
organization Preservation Consultant date 31 December 2013
street & number 34 Delaware St telephone 607-547-9507
city or town Cooperstown state New York zip code 13326
e-mail jravage@stny.rr.com

Additional Documentation

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

Photographs

List of digital photographs for **NY_Rensselaer County_Tommhannock ME Church**
Photographs of property shot by Jessie A. Ravage (34 Delaware Street, Cooperstown, NY, 13326, 607-547-9507, jravage@stny.rr.com), November 2013.

0001: Front and east side of church

0002: Front and west side of church

0003: West side and back of church

0004: Interior, northeast corner of church

0005: Interior, southeast corner of church

Property Owner:

name Town of Pittstown
street & number 123 Tomhannock Rd telephone
city or town Valley Falls state NY zip code 12185

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.

Tomhannock Methodist Episcopal Church
Tomhannock, Rensselaer Co., NY

97 CR 110
Valley Falls, NY 12185

Coordinate System: NAD 1983 UTM Zone 18N
Projection: Transverse Mercator
Datum: North American 1983
Units: Meter

0 650 1,300 2,600 Feet

Tomhannock Church

USGS quad index

Tax Parcel Data:
Rensselaer Co, RPS
rensco.com/countymaps

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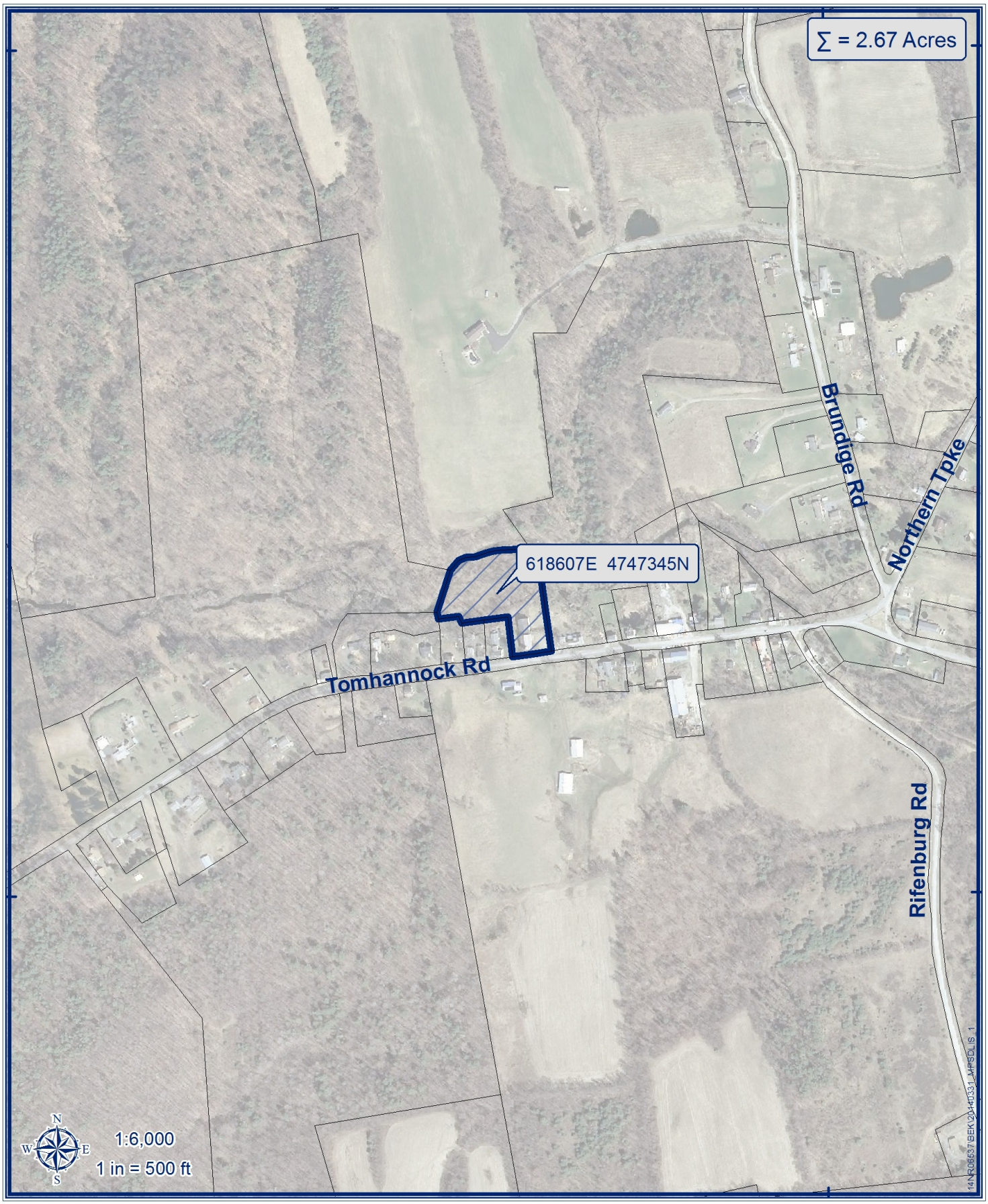
NEW YORK STATE

Tomhannock Methodist Episcopal Church
Tomhannock, Rensselaer Co., NY

97 CR 110
Valley Falls, NY 12185



619000

Coordinate System: NAD 1983 UTM Zone 18N
Projection: Transverse Mercator
Datum: North American 1983
Units: Meter

0 170 340 680 Feet

Tomhannock Church

Tax Parcel Data:
Rensselaer Co, RPS
rensco.com/countymaps

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EXIT
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