

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

For NPS use only

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

received

date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Newtown Presbyterian Church

and or common Old Presbyterian Church of Newtown

2. Location

street & number West side of Sycamore Street

N/A not for publication

city, town Newtown Township N/A vicinity of

state Pennsylvania code 042 county Bucks code 017

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational	<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	N/A in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	N/A being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Presbyterian Church of Newtown

street & number Washington Avenue and Chancellor Street

city, town Newtown N/A vicinity of state Pennsylvania

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Bucks County Courthouse

street & number East Court Street

city, town Doylestown state Pennsylvania

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Bucks County Register of Historic Places has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date January 28, 1977 federal state county local

depository for survey records Bucks County Conservancy

city, town Doylestown state Pennsylvania

7. Description

Condition

excellent
 good
 fair

deteriorated
 ruins
 unexposed

Check one

unaltered
 altered

Check one

original site
 moved date N/A

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Newtown Presbyterian Church consists of a main church building constructed in 1769 and substantially remodeled in 1842, a sessions house built c. 1800, a graveyard, and stone walls. The church building is a stone, rectangular 2½ story edifice influenced by the Greek Revival style. The church has good integrity, appearing much as it did after its 1842 renovations. The church is located on a parcel of land which rises above the west edge of Newtown. The church lies across Sycamore Street from the Newtown Historic District. The nominated property contains two contributing buildings, one contributing site, and one contributing structure.

The church exterior features rubble fieldstone on the north and west elevations and ashlar stone work with water table on the south and east facades. A boxed cornice dating to 1769 frames the roof and continues as a pent eave on the east and west gable ends. Two small interior end chimneys rise above the roof ridge. Evidence in the stone work, substantiated by a c. 1838 painting by Thomas Hicks, shows that much of the remaining church exterior has been greatly changed since 1769. Originally the north face was pierced by a pair of two story windows with round arch tops with fitted stone voussoirs. The east elevation had three, one story round arch windows on the second floor, most likely matched by three windows beneath on the first floor. The original west facade was treated similarly but with only two windows on each floor. The south elevation was punctuated by matching end bays with entrance doors on the first floor and round arched windows on the second story. A tripartite Palladian window very likely pierced the middle of south facade.

The present fenestration dates primarily to the remodeling undertaken in 1842 and reflects Greek Revival influences. On the north and south elevations, three tall rectangular windows comprised of three large sashes of fifteen panes each replaced the previous entrances and windows. These tall windows have wood lintels and sills, topped with stone flat arches on the north side, and stone flat arches with keystones on the south facade. Louvered shutters flank these windows. On the east end three 12/8 rectangular windows with wood lintels and sills and stone flat arches also replaced the original windows in 1842. On the first story double paneled doors with transom, wood frames and cornice were constructed in the outside bays. The center bay was filled in with ashlar stone. A large round datestone which reads, "Erected 1769, Repaired 1842," appeared in the tympanum of the east gable. In 1842 a three-sided rubble stone apse with hipped roof was also added, covering all but the very tops of the original second story windows. The apse has two rectangular window openings.

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The only major exterior changes made after 1842 were the c. 1880 addition of a porch and two vestibules on the east end first story, and the construction of two chimneys on the west end. Each vestibule is pierced by two windows with four light sash and paneled side doors in the vestibules lead from a central porch to the 1842 doors hidden from view. The porch and vestibules are of wood construction decorated in the Eastern Stick style. A shed roof with centered low cross gable spans the vestibules and porch. Stone steps lead up to the porch. Between c. 1880 and the early twentieth century, slender exterior brick chimneys flanking the apse were added to the west end.

The interior of the church was also remodeled from its original plan to its present appearance in 1842. The pulpit was at first centered on the north wall and was reached by a high flight of steps. Pews with high backs were arranged around the pulpit on a brick floor. A second story balcony on the south side was reached by stairways in the southeast and southwest corners.

In 1842 the pulpit was moved to the newly constructed apse, new pews were installed to face the west end, and the balcony was re-built along the north, east and south sides. The dominant and dramatic feature of this interior is the Greek Revival apse surrounds. Representing the post and lintel theme are the tall flat pilasters with modest capitals, and a wide entablature punctuated by one narrow horizontal strip of molding and capped with a simple molded cornice. This treatment is repeated in a scaled-down false surround against the rear wall of the apse. Within the apse is a raised wooden platform and walnut pulpit.

The balconies have front facings dressed with long horizontal panels above carrying beams faced with an entablature of narrow horizontal molding bands. The balconies are supported with Doric columns. Paired kerosene lamps are affixed to the entablature near each column. Staircases with slender turned newel posts and balusters ascend to the balconies in the southeast and northeast corners. A small Victorian pump organ is located in the southeast corner of the balcony. Wooden pew benches with raised end panels are arranged on the main floor in three sections with two aisles that serve both side and center pews. Tongue and groove wainscoting runs along the walls beneath the balcony. The flooring consists of random width pine boards. Vertical board double doors open into small interior vestibules and from there into the c. 1880 exterior vestibules. Windows framed with beaded molding are recessed into the thick stone walls. The only interior feature remaining from 1769 is a cyma recta crown molding surrounding the ceiling. The only major change since 1842 has been the 1901 installation of stained

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glass windows behind large protective outside panes in the apse window openings.

To the southwest of the main church building and bordering on the property line is the 1½ story sessions house. Built c. 1800 of rubble fieldstone and originally plastered, the building measures 28'1" by 17'10". It has a gable roof covered with wooden shingles with a box cornice and flush, tapered bargeboards. The original doorway is located in the center of the north gable end, flanked by two 6/9 sash windows. The long east facade has a doorway added later in the center bay with 6/9 sash windows on each side. One 6/9 sash window is in the center of the west facade and two are in the south facade.

The graveyard begins directly to the west of the main church building and sessions house. The gravestones range from the late eighteenth century through the nineteenth century and are set fairly closely together facing east. Many are arranged in family plots. There are twenty-two graves of American Revolutionary War soldiers within the graveyard. A stone wall is evident along the west (rear) and south property lines. Portions of the wall are ashlar and portions fieldstone. The wall in many places is deteriorating or non-existent. An ashlar stone retaining wall is along the east side of the property paralleling Sycamore Street. The property is maintained in lawn with both young and mature trees and shrubbery around the front of the church.

The church building and sessions house possess good integrity. The church building is largely an 1842 remodeling in a 1769 stone shell. The interior appears very much today as it did in 1842, with only one significant change since then (the addition of two stained glass windows). The exterior has experienced only two major changes since 1842. The c. 1880 vestibules and porch add Victorian elements to one facade of a building otherwise accented by Greek Revival elements. The slender two rear chimneys detract little from the building's overall 1842 appearance. The nearby sessions house survives much as it appeared in the nineteenth century.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates 1769, 1842, 1880 **Builder/Architect** Mathias Hutchinson, original building

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Newtown Presbyterian Church is significant as one of the best preserved examples of the remodelings of the earliest non-Quaker Protestant churches in Bucks County. Quakers dominated much of the eighteenth century history of Bucks County. However, by the end of the eighteenth century other Protestant denominations, including Presbyterians, Baptists and Methodists, established their first small, frequently simply constructed churches in the county. As these congregations grew larger between 1800 and the Civil War, they often expanded and remodeled their early buildings into more ornate edifices. The Newtown Presbyterian Church is one of the best preserved examples of the architectural evolution of non-Quaker Protestant churches in Bucks County between 1800 and the Civil War. The nominated church has the added distinction of having one of the few pre-Civil War sessions houses, which were important ancillary church buildings, left in the county.

In 1734 the Presbyterians were the first to organize a congregation in the Newtown vicinity, preceding Newtown Friends meeting by eighty-one years. The congregation was the third oldest Presbyterian church in Bucks County, following the formation of Neshaminy-Warwick Presbyterian Church in Warwick Township in 1726, and Deep Run Presbyterian Church in Bedminster Township in 1732. Newtown Presbyterian Church drew congregants from the Scotch-Irish population in a broad radius around Bucks County's eighteenth century county seat, Newtown. By 1769 the Newtown congregation had grown sufficiently to warrant replacing their first log church with a stone structure.

The 1769 edifice was constructed by Mathias Hutchinson, master stone mason, to whom is also attributed the Buckingham Friends meeting house and his home, Partridge Hall in Solebury Township. He erected a 2½ story stone building with the main entrances on the south side. He repeated the floor plan he had used the previous year in erecting the Buckingham Friends meeting house, arranging the pews or benches to focus on the center of a long wall (in the case of the Newtown Presbyterian Church, on the pulpit at the north wall).

During the first half of the nineteenth century, the Newtown congregation outgrew its stone building. About 1800 they erected a heated 1½ story stone sessions house where session meetings and church school classes were held. In 1842 the congregation substantially remodeled the church building, greatly changing the interior floor plan to accommodate more people. The apse was added to contain a new pulpit on

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the west end, the main floor was given over entirely to pews, and the earlier balcony on the south side was extended along three walls. The interior was enhanced with Greek Revival features such as the Doric balcony columns and the apse surrounds. The exterior fenestration was also changed greatly to reflect Greek Revival styling, including the entrances which were moved from the south side to the east gable end. The larger and perhaps more prosperous congregation remodeled the church in order to "'make much more room'" and make the building more "'comfortable and convenient.'" In changing Hutchinson's floor plan, they also sought to "'render the whole church much more convenient to speak in.'"

Between 1800 and the Civil War other early non-Quaker Protestant churches in Bucks County were also remodeling and expanding their church buildings. The Neshaminy-Warwick Presbyterian Church remodeled their church building, originally constructed in 1743, into a Gothic edifice in 1842. Tall, pointed arch windows replaced square colonial windows on their building. The Southampton Baptist Church in Southampton Township was the oldest Baptist congregation in the county, having built their first church in 1731. In 1772 they rebuilt their church, and then considerably enlarged it in 1814 to meet the needs of a growing congregation. The expanded church (listed on the National Register on September 18, 1978) has a plain stuccoed exterior. The interior features pews separated by three aisles, and a balcony with Doric columns much like those in the Newtown Presbyterian Church. The second oldest Baptist church in Bucks County, the New Britain Baptist Church in New Britain Borough, erected their first building in 1744. Rebuilt in 1815, the structure was remodeled and enlarged in 1857 to seat 600 people. The building was enhanced with Greek Revival elements including cornices over wide bands of trim on the front doorways. Similarly, one of the first Methodist congregations in the county, Penns Park Methodist Church in Wrightstown Township, rebuilt their first church in 1856 into their present stone structure (listed on the National Register as part of Penns Park Historic District, March 13, 1986).

Of the various churches that were remodeled and enlarged between 1800 and the Civil War, the Newtown Presbyterian Church is one of the best preserved representatives. Several churches have had large twentieth century wings added to the pre-Civil War buildings. The Neshaminy-Warwick Presbyterian Church, for example, has large modern wings that extend to one side of the earlier Gothic section. The Penns Park Methodist Church also has had post-Civil War frame additions attached to the stone section. None of the other remodeled churches remains completely unaltered. Much like the Newtown Presbyterian Church the Southampton Baptist Church has a Victorian first story porch added

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to the front facade. Thus the Newtown Presbyterian Church stands as a very good representative of the architectural evolution of Bucks County's earliest non-Quaker Protestant churches.

The Newtown Presbyterian Church also includes another significant building. The sessions house illustrates an important component of church functions. Eighteenth and nineteenth century church complexes in Bucks County often had the main church building, the sessions or vestry house, carriage sheds, and a walled graveyard. The sessions or vestry house was the meeting place for church elders and classes. Very often the sessions houses and sheds fell into disrepair and were removed. Only one other sessions house is known to still stand in Bucks County, the 1848 1½ story stone building of the Neshaminy-Warwick Presbyterian Church. This sessions house is currently used by the Hartsville Fire Company.

The cemetery provides evidence as to the role of the Newtown Presbyterian Church's in the Revolutionary War. Unlike their pacifist Quaker neighbors, the Scotch-Irish Presbyterians took an active role in the Revolution. Of the nine cemeteries in Newtown, only the one belonging to the Newtown Presbyterian Church contains graves of Revolutionary War veterans. The participation of the Newtown congregation in the war was not unusual. The original buildings of both the Newtown and Neshaminy-Warwick churches, both altered, provided shelter to soldiers.

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- Cassell, Pauline, History of Bedminster, Bucks County, PA (published by Bedminster Bicentennial Committee, 1976).
- Gemmill, Helen H., A History of Neshaminy-Warwick Presbyterian Church 1726-1976 (Lansdale, PA: Nash Printing, Inc., 1976).
- Klett, Guy S., Presbyterians in Colonial Pennsylvania (Phila., PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1937).
- Klett, Guy S., The Scotch-Irish in Pennsylvania, Pennsylvania History Studies No. 3. (Gettysburg, PA: The Pennsylvania Historical Association, 1948).
- Maxson, William R., ed., Warwick Township 1733-1983 (published by Warwick Township Republican Club, 1983).
- Mertz, John E., The Presbyterian Church, Newtown, PA 1734-1976 (manuscript at Bucks County Historical Society, Newtown Historical Records, Folder 10).
- _____, "Report upon the Early History of Presbyterian Churches", Journal of the Presbyterian Historical Society, Volume II (Phila., PA: Presbyterian Historical Society, No. 5, June 1904).
- Stryker, William S., The Battles of Trenton and Princeton (Cambridge, MASS: The Riverside Press of Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1898).

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VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION AND JUSTIFICATION:

Boundary Description

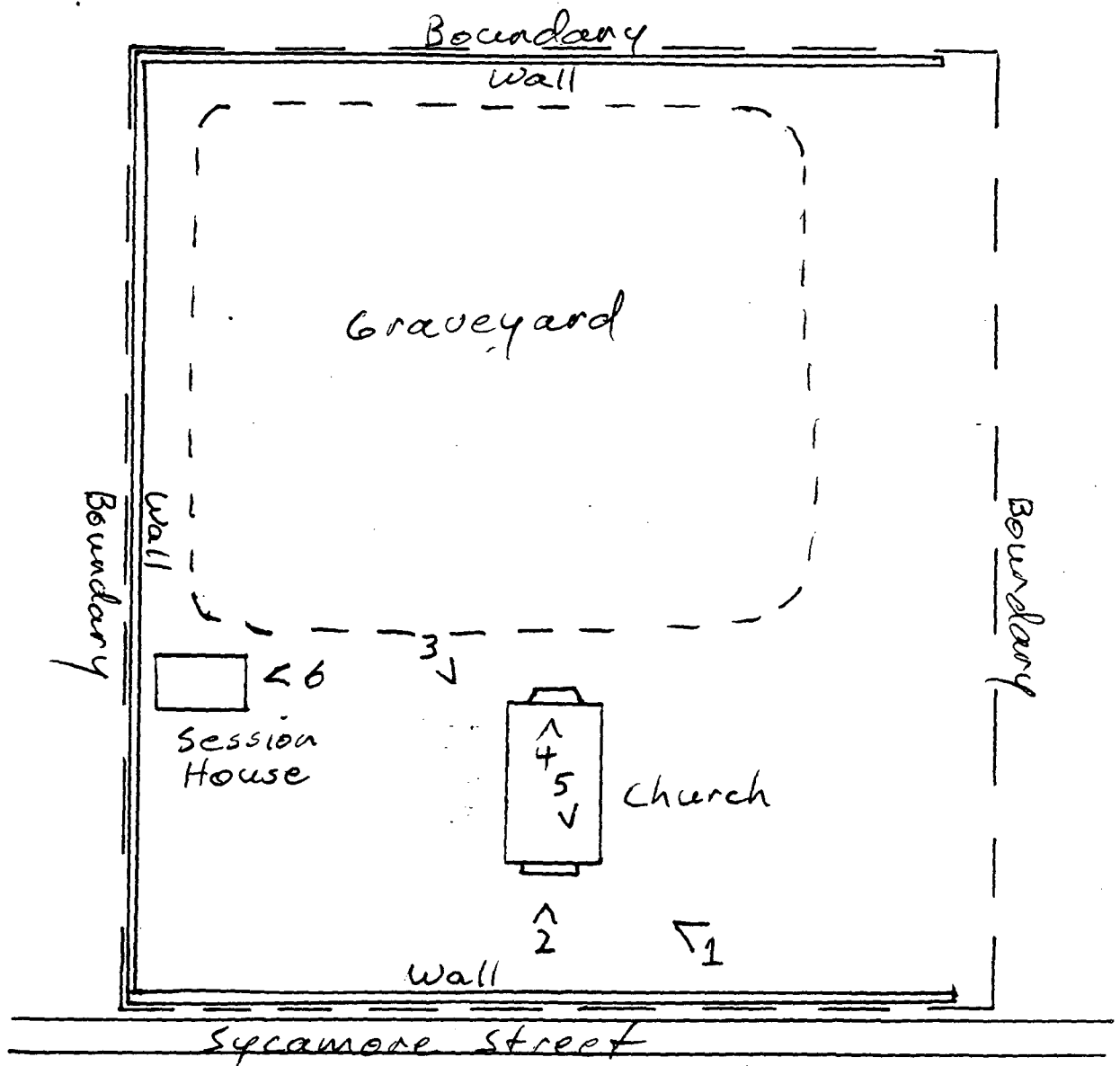
ALL THAT CERTAIN tract or parcel of land situate in the Township of Newtown, County of Bucks and State of Pennsylvania with the improvements thereon described in a Minor Subdivision Plan made for Bill Marsh Enterprises, Inc., William M. and George W. Lovett, and the Newtown Presbyterian Church, recorded in Bucks County Plan Book 199, page 39 and described as follows:

BEGINNING at a point on the westerly side of Sycamore Street (66.00 feet wide) at a corner of land now or late the Prudential Insurance Company of America c/o The American Stores Company, being tax map parcel 29-10-7; thence along said Sycamore Street South five degrees, fifteen minutes, thirty seconds West (S 05°15'30" W) two hundred forty-four and thirty-five one-hundredths feet (244.35') to a point on said street, a corner of lands now or late William M. and George W. Lovett, being tax parcel 29-10-85-1; thence along lands of said Lovetts North eighty-eight degrees, twenty-six minutes, thirty seconds West (N 88°26'30" W) three hundred eighty-one and eighty-two one-hundredths feet (381.82') to a point in line of other lands now or late William M. and George W. Lovett, being tax map parcel 29-10-85; thence by lands of said Lovetts the two following courses and distances (1) North five degrees, thirty-three minutes, thirty seconds East (N 05°33'30") two hundred forty-four and ten one-hundredths feet (244.10'); (2) South eighty-eight degrees, twenty-nine minutes, thirty seconds East (S 88°29'30" E) one hundred eleven and forty one-hundredths feet (111.40'); thence along lands now or late the said Prudential Insurance Company of America c/o American Stores Company, being tax map parcel 29-10-7, the same course, a distance of two hundred sixty-nine and two one-hundredths feet (269.02') to the place of beginning.

Containing two acres and two hundred thirty-two one-thousandths acres (2.232) of land.

Boundary Justification

The boundaries submitted with this nomination follow the present county tax parcel #29-10-6. The boundaries contain the nominated buildings, graveyard and wall, and the remaining historically associated land.



Newtown Presbyterian Church
 Bucks County, Pennsylvania

< Photo View



5984 1 SE
(BUCKINGHAM)

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

Newtown Presbyterian Church
Bucks County
Zone 18
Langhorne Quadrangle
E505200 N4453320

6064 IV SW
505 (LAMBERTVILLE)

