

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEETFort Miller Reformed Church Complex
Washington County, NY

Section number 7 Page 1

Description

The Fort Miller Reformed Church complex is a rare surviving, intact example of an early 19th century church with three support buildings constructed over the balance of that century. The property, located on a 1.1 acre parcel in the hamlet of Fort Miller, town of Fort Edward, Washington County, NY, is bounded by Fort Miller Road on the east, on the north and south by private early 19th century residences, on the west by the Hudson River.¹ The church, built in 1816, is an excellent example of Federal period ecclesiastical architecture that has retained its original design and features as well as its function. The support buildings, constructed over the following 80+ years, also retain much of their original integrity and provide an architectural record of a developing 19th century rural community.

The church's most distinctive exterior features, maintained from its construction, include: Two-story, clapboard-sided sanctuary, approximately 60'x 40', built on a cut stone foundation; gable front with projecting four-story bell tower with c.1870 bell²; slate roof; 12/12 and 12/8 sashes, many with original, hand-blown glass panes; recessed entry with paneled door and entablature. The interior also retains a high level of integrity with an open, two-story floor plan with bench type pews on the first floor, accommodating approximately 100 people; a raised pulpit with an alcove; a 3/4 perimeter balcony with bench seating for approximately 50 people; plaster walls; hand-hewn, plank fascias with intricate, carved beadwork on the front of the balcony; and a candle chandelier (now electrified) illuminating the sanctuary.

In 1896, the congregation added a two-story, cross-gabled, rear wing to the sanctuary. This wood frame addition was approximately 40' long x 50' wide, and formed an "L" shape with the original building. The first floor of the new addition contained kitchen, dining and meeting facilities for the congregation and village. An elevated stage (with a curtain and lighting facilities) and seating area for about 100 people were constructed on the second floor.

1. The Fort Miller Reformed Church complex is located in the center of a potential historic district; however, for purposes of funding, the church complex is being proposed for individual listing.

2. Bell is not original to building; it was taken from the Fort Miller Baptist Church, which was being demolished, and installed in the Fort Miller Reformed Church in 1946 to replace another bell that was placed in the tower in 1940. Prior to that, there was never a bell in the tower.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEETFort Miller Reformed Church Complex
Washington County, NY

Section number 7 Page 2

The carriage and horse shed (c.1818-1822), attached to the rear of the 1816 sanctuary, originally measured approximately 80' long x 20' wide. Over the years, however, this space has been encroached upon as the congregation required more space. In 1896, the carriage and horse shed was cut back to accommodate the two-story wing; in 1946, to accommodate a modern kitchen; in 1953 for a furnace room; and, finally, in 1983, the 1946 and 1953 expansions were enlarged (roof raised and side-bumped out) for additional Sunday School space. Today, the remaining portion of the original carriage and horse shed is approximately 50' in length and remains intact. It is now used as a garage and for storage.

Three other buildings (all contributing) are located on the property. They are: A parsonage (c.1845), a custodian/tenant house (c.1845) and a late 19th century clapboard barn. Both houses are located south of the church across a parking lot; the parsonage is in the front and the tenant house directly behind it. Both are 1-1/2 story, modest, wood frame, clapboard-sided vernacular buildings that do not strictly conform to any particular architectural style or influence, but do reflect some original, Greek Revival design elements (front gable with pronounced cornice returns) as well as featuring later Victorian-style gingerbread ornamentation. Except for some minor structural alterations (eg. a second floor addition to provide a bedroom on the parsonage house), both houses are also essentially intact. The late 19th century barn was moved to the church property around the turn of the century and immediately converted for use as the town hall and voting

location.³ It measures about 40' long x 20' wide and sits to the rear of the church perpendicular to the carriage/horse shed, almost touching it on its west end. In order to accommodate the building's new use as the town hall and district voting location for Fort Miller, hardwood flooring, wainscoting, heat and permanent voting booths were added. This building was used until 1995, when its function was taken over by the more modern village fire department building. The town hall building will be reused for church purposes, possibly for additional Sunday School capacity.

3. The exact date of this move is unknown, as is the impetus for the move.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Fort Miller Reformed Church Complex
Washington County, NY

Section number 8 Page 1

Statement of Significance

The Fort Miller Reformed Church Complex is both architecturally and historically significant. Architecturally, it is significant as a rare surviving example of a 19th century church complex comprised of a highly intact Federal period church with a late-19th century two-story rear wing; a c.1845 parsonage; a c.1845 tenant house; a late-19th century frame building known as the Town Hall; and an early-19th century attached stable/carriage barn. Historically, it is significant for its settlement period associations and for the important role it played in molding the social history of the community. The church, built in 1816, is an excellent example of Federal period ecclesiastical architecture that has retained an exceptional degree of its original architectural integrity, both interior and exterior. The other buildings on the property all retain high levels of integrity to their period of significance and contribute to the overall historic significance of the property.

Development around Fort Miller began during the French and Indian War in 1755 when Colonel Miller of the British Army constructed a fort at the rapids in the Hudson River to control the portage there. (This fort was located on the west bank of the Hudson, about 1/2 mile from the church.) In 1768 William Duer, a prominent British citizen, who later supported the colonies during the Revolutionary War, purchased timberlands around Fort Miller and constructed a sawmill at the rapids.⁴ This construction and subsequent lumbering activity served as the catalyst for economic activity and settlement in the area.

In 1815, Noah and Benjamin Payn, local farmers and landowners, organized a group of individuals to build a church. Property was donated and \$2,000 was raised by public subscription. The Payns commissioned a local craftsman, Shepperd Norcross, to build the church.⁵ The church, the present day sanctuary, was completed in 1816. It is interesting to note that, although the bell tower is an original feature of the church, it was without a bell until 1940 when it received the bell from the North Greenwich, NY Methodist Church. A short time later (1946), it was removed and replaced with the existing c.1870 bell that was taken from the demolished Fort Miller Miller Baptist Church (located about 150 yards to the north of the Fort Miller Reformed Church, across Fort Miller Road). This bell, which was cast at the Meneely Bell Works in Troy, NY, is about 3' high, weighs approximately 750 lbs., and was judged to have a superior timbre relative to the previous bell

4. John Henry Brandow, The Story of Old Saratoga (Albany, New York: Fort Orange Press, 1919) page 352.

5. Millard M. Gifford, The Phoenix of the North (New York, New York: Kwik Kopy, 1971) page 6.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEETFort Miller Reformed Church Complex
Washington County, NY

Section number 8 Page 2

from the Methodist Church. That bell was given to a newly-formed, local Wesleyan Methodist Church and continues to be used today.

From 1816-22 the church sanctuary was available to any Protestant group wishing to hold a service there. The building was not dedicated to the sole use of a specific congregation. This was unusual in early 19th century religious life. A record of church activities during this six year period does not exist.

In 1822 a Reformed Dutch Church⁶ congregation was organized and the sanctuary was changed from an open, non-denominational (i.e., Protestant) meeting house to one dedicated to the RDC. (Again, no record exists as to why this change occurred.) The initial entry in the Record for the Reformed Dutch Church of Fort Miller, dated August 22, 1822, states that the 15 organizing members "of a society in Fort Miller, impressed with being formed into a congregation, do earnestly request the Classis of Washington (County) to organize us as a church."⁷ This permission was granted.

A reading of the Record provides detail as to how the church increased its membership, dealt with some of the issues facing it over the next 30 years and how the church became an important factor in life around Fort Miller. During this period, Fort Miller was becoming a thriving hamlet due to the many mills (primarily saw, paper and grist) and farms in the area and its close proximity to the original Champlain Canal.

However, beginning in the 1820's and culminating in 1849, an issue was developing that deeply divided the community and caused the church to become inactive from 1853 to 1867. In 1821, New York State constructed a dam across the Hudson River and dug a feeder channel about 1/4 of a mile north of the church to divert water into the original Champlain Canal and make the canal more usable throughout the year. This dam raised the water level in the river and better controlled its flow, benefitting the saw and grist mills at Fort Miller. But the higher water level flooded much grazing and crop growing fields, particularly during the spring rains. Farmers suffered economic losses, which they attributed to the dam. A 20+ year conflict raged between the mill owners, who provided jobs to many residents and farmers. It increasingly divided the village and congregation. Much of this debate took place in the church. In 1849, the dam was blown up, presumably by those aligned with the farmers' interests. It was not rebuilt. The mills closed and jobs were lost. People moved from the area and the congregation dwindled. With this lingering division and loss of population the church became inactive

6. This is the name of the church that was established in 1822.

7. The Record of the Reformed Dutch Church of Fort Miller, the initial entry in the church minutes.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEETFort Miller Reformed Church Complex
Washington County, NY

Section number 8 Page 3

until 1867, when it was reorganized.⁸ The process of healing these wounds and rebuilding the congregation consumed the next two to three decades.

In about 1845, two houses were constructed on property directly south of the church. The front (easternmost) house, known as the parsonage, was used at various times during the 19th century by the church's full-time pastors. The remainder of the time it was a private rental property. The rear (westernmost) house was alternately used as a house for the church custodian and as a rental property for the church. In 1911, this property, along with the two houses, was deeded to the church. Both houses continued to be used for the same purposes.

During the last decade of the 19th century, Fort Miller began to grow with the building of a paper mill at the rapids, just to the south of the location of the British fort. More people settled in the hamlet and the church required larger facilities.

In 1896, the church built a two-story wing at the rear of the sanctuary. The first floor provided dining and meeting facilities for religious, social and community activities such as the Grange. On the second floor, the church built a theatrical stage to accommodate plays, speeches and debates. Seating capacity was about 100. For the next 50+ years this stage was used by both church and non-church groups for activities ranging from religious pageants to vaudeville and became the center of Fort Miller's social and cultural life. (The second floor was converted about 30 years ago to additional Sunday School rooms.) Further reinforcing the important role the church played in the community was the physical presence of the town hall/voting place (converted late 19th century barn) located on the church property and used for that purpose from c.1900 until 1995.

From 1900 - 1930, the Fort Miller area was at the height of its economic activity. During this period, the village at various times contained two churches (the RDC and Baptist), four stores, two hotels, a blacksmith shop, a post office, two schools and the paper mill. It was located on the Hudson Valley Electric Railway and at Lock 6 of the modern Champlain Barge Canal. Many farms operated in the immediate area and used Fort Miller for commerce. The church was at the religious and social center of this activity. With the Depression and the general economic restructuring after World War II, Fort Miller has become a smaller, residential village. But throughout this 60+ year period, the church has remained open and, in particular, over the past 25 years has developed a new vitality in carrying out its religious and community mission.

8. The Phoenix of the North, pages 37-40.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM

OMB NO. 1024-0018, NPS FORM

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties or districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classifications, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name FORT MILLER REFORMED CHURCH COMPLEX

other names/site number N/A

2. Location

street & number FORT MILLER ROAD (N/A) not for publication

city, town FORT EDWARD (N/A) vicinity

state NEW YORK code NY county WASHINGTON code 115 zip code 12828

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this ☒ 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 ☒ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant ☐ nationally ☐ statewide ☒ locally. ([] See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

J.W. Aldrich
Deputy Commissioner for Historic Preservation
Signature of certifying official

30 Sept. 96
Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. ([] See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

N/A
Signature of commenting or other official Date

N/A
State or federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby, certify that this property is:
☐ entered in the National Register.

Signature of keeper Date of Action

- ☐ See continuation sheet.
☐ determined eligible for the National Register. [] see continuation sheet.
☐ determined not eligible for the National Register.
☐ removed from the National Register.
☐ other, (explain:)

FORT MILLER REFORMED CHURCH COMPLEX

Name of Property

WASHINGTON COUNTY, NY

County and State

5. ClassificationOwnership of Property
(Check as many
boxes as apply)Category of Property
(check only one box)Number of Resources within Property
(do not include previously listed
resources in the count)☒ private
☐ public-local
☐ public-State
☐ public-Federal☒ building(s)
☐ district
☐ site
☐ structure
☐ object

Contributing	Noncontributing	
4	0	buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
4	0	Total

Name of related multiple property
listings (enter "N/A" if property is
not part of a multiple property listing)Number of contributing resources previousl
listed in the National RegisterN/A06. Function or Use

Historic Function

(enter categories from instructions)

Current Functions

(enter categories from instructions)

RELIGION/religious facilityRELIGION/religious facility7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

Materials

(enter categories from instructions)

EARLY REPUBLIC/Federalfoundation STONE/Granitewalls WOOD/Weatherboardroof STONE/Slate

other

Narrative Description(describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more
continuation sheets.)

FORT MILLER REFORMED CHURCH COMPLEX
Name of Property

WASHINGTON COUNTY, NY
County and State

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria
(Mark an "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- ☒ A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- ☐ B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☒ C Property that 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 pre-history or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "X" in all the 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.)

SETTLEMENT PERIOD
SOCIAL HISTORY
POLITICS/GOVERNMENT

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1816 - 1946

Significant Dates

1816; c.1845; 1896; c.1900; c.1940;
1946

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

ARCHITECT: (UNKNOWN)

BUILDER: SHEPPERD NORCROSS

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

FORT MILLER REFORMED CHURCH COMPLEX

Name of Property

WASHINGTON COUNTY, NY

County and State

9. Major Bibliographical ReferencesBrandow, John Henry. The Story of Old Saratoga. Albany, New York. Fort Orange Press, 1919.Gifford, Millard M. The Phoenix of the North. New York, New York. Kwik Kopy, 1971.Record of the Reformed Dutch Church of Fort Miller. (Minutes of the church governing board meetings 1822 - present.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS): Primary location of additional data:

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> State historic preservation office |
| <input type="checkbox"/> previously listed in the National Register | <input type="checkbox"/> Other State agency |
| <input type="checkbox"/> previously determined eligible by the National Register | <input type="checkbox"/> Federal agency |
| <input type="checkbox"/> designated a National Historic Landmark | <input type="checkbox"/> Local government |
| <input type="checkbox"/> recorded by Historic American Building Survey # _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> University |
| <input type="checkbox"/> recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> Other |
- Name of repository: _____

10. Geographical DataAcreage of property APPROX. 1.1 ACRE

UTM References

1	<u>18</u>	<u>615275</u>	<u>4779756</u>	2										
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting								
3				4										
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting								

Verbal Boundary Description

NOMINATED BOUNDARIES ARE OUTLINED IN BOLD ON THE ATTACHED MAP.

Boundary Justification

NOMINATED BOUNDARIES FOLLOW CURRENT LEGAL LOT LINES WHICH ARE CONSISTENT WITH PROPERTY OWNED BY THE CHURCH SINCE 1911.

11. Form Prepared Byname/title Linda M. Garofalini, Program Analyst (see also below)organization NYS Office of Parks, Rec. & Historic Preservation date 8/2/96street & number Peebles Island, PO Box 189 telephone 518-237-8643city or town Waterford state NY zip code 12188-0189Research and documentation provided by: Malcolm S. Sanders
37 Hearthstone Drive
Gansevoort, NY 12831

Property Owner

name Fort Miller Reformed Church (c/o Rev. Charles Bailey)street & number Fort Miller Roadcity or town Fort Edward state NY zip code 12828

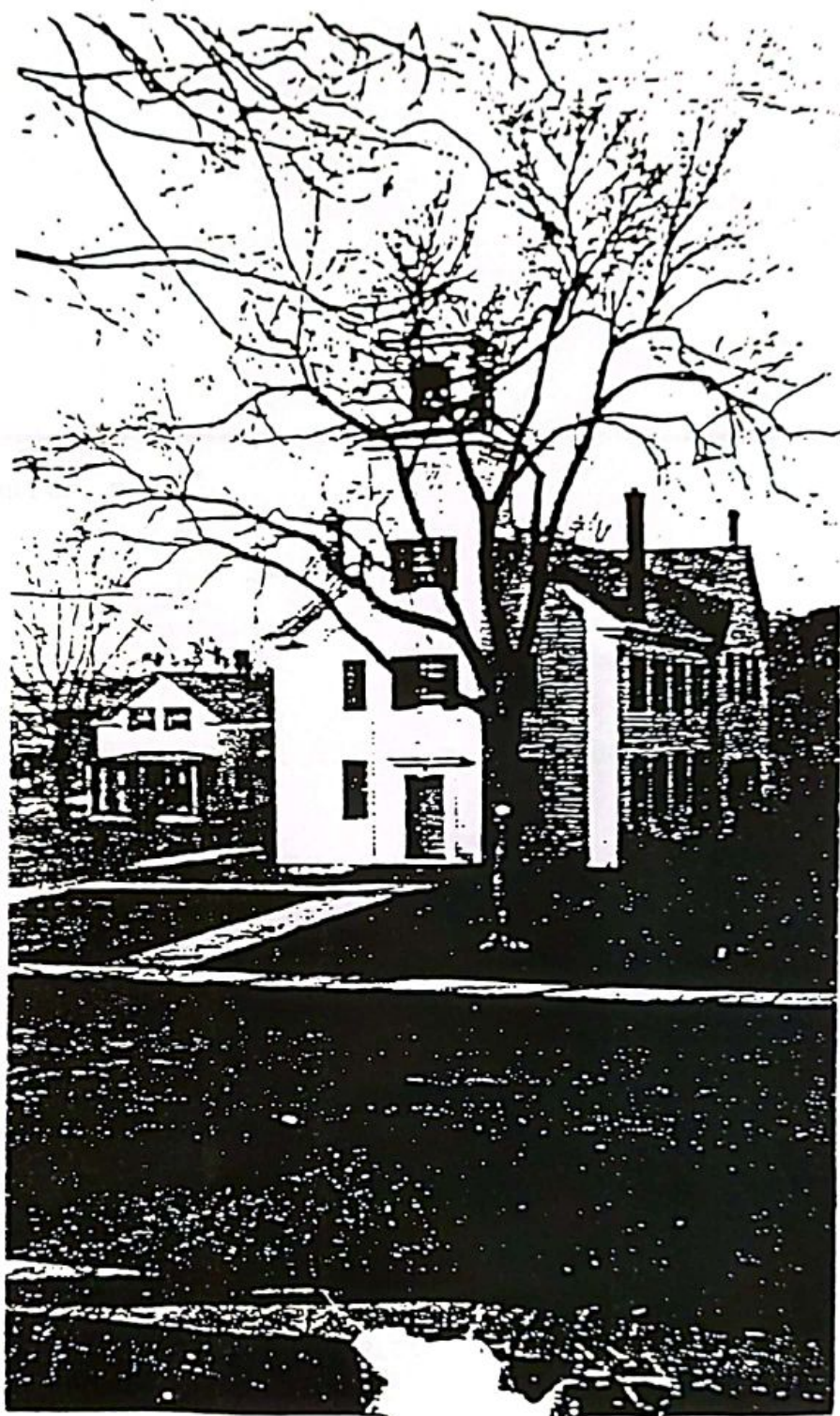
Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the 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 Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Project (1024-0018).



HISTORIC VIEW (1892)

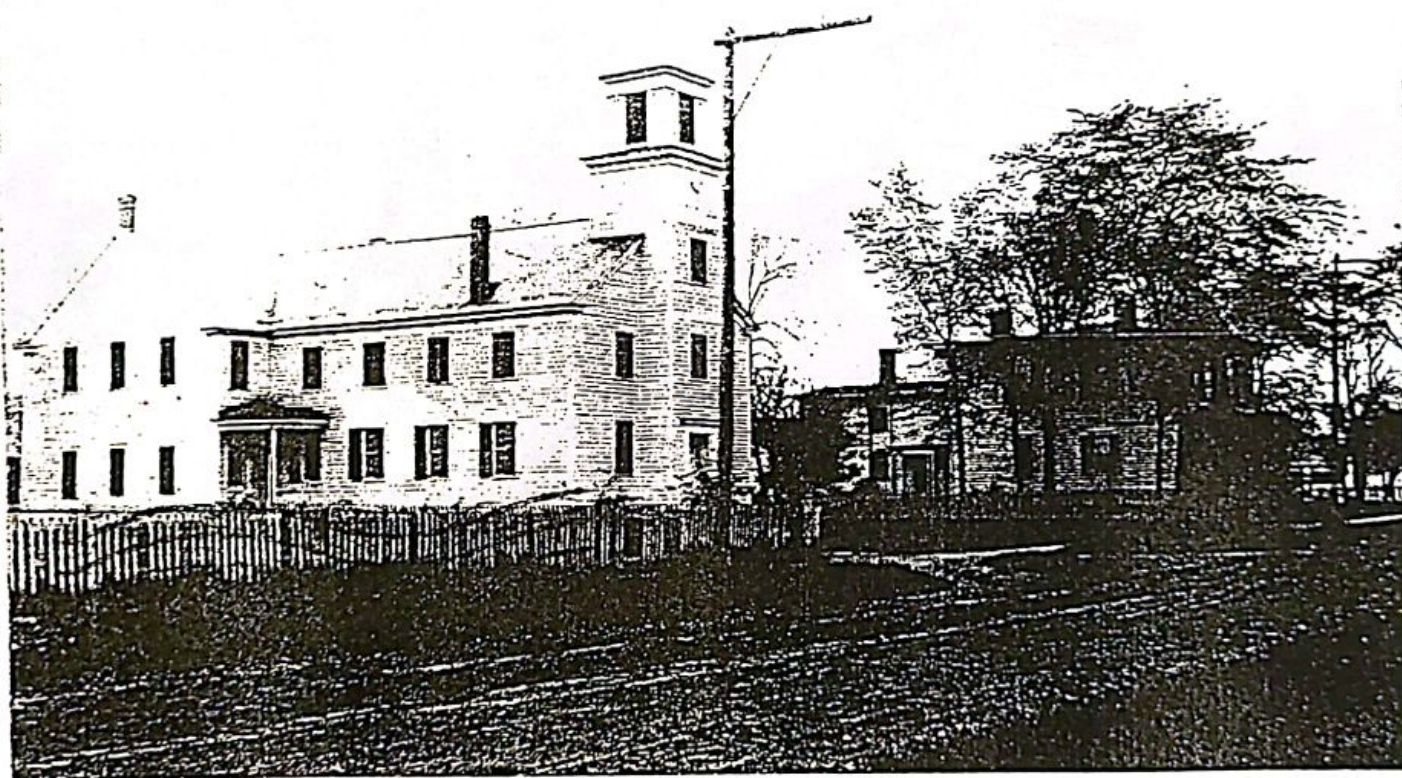
FORT MILLER REFORMED CHURCH COMPLEX
FORT EDWARD, WASHINGTON COUNTY, NY



HISTORIC VIEW (C.1905)

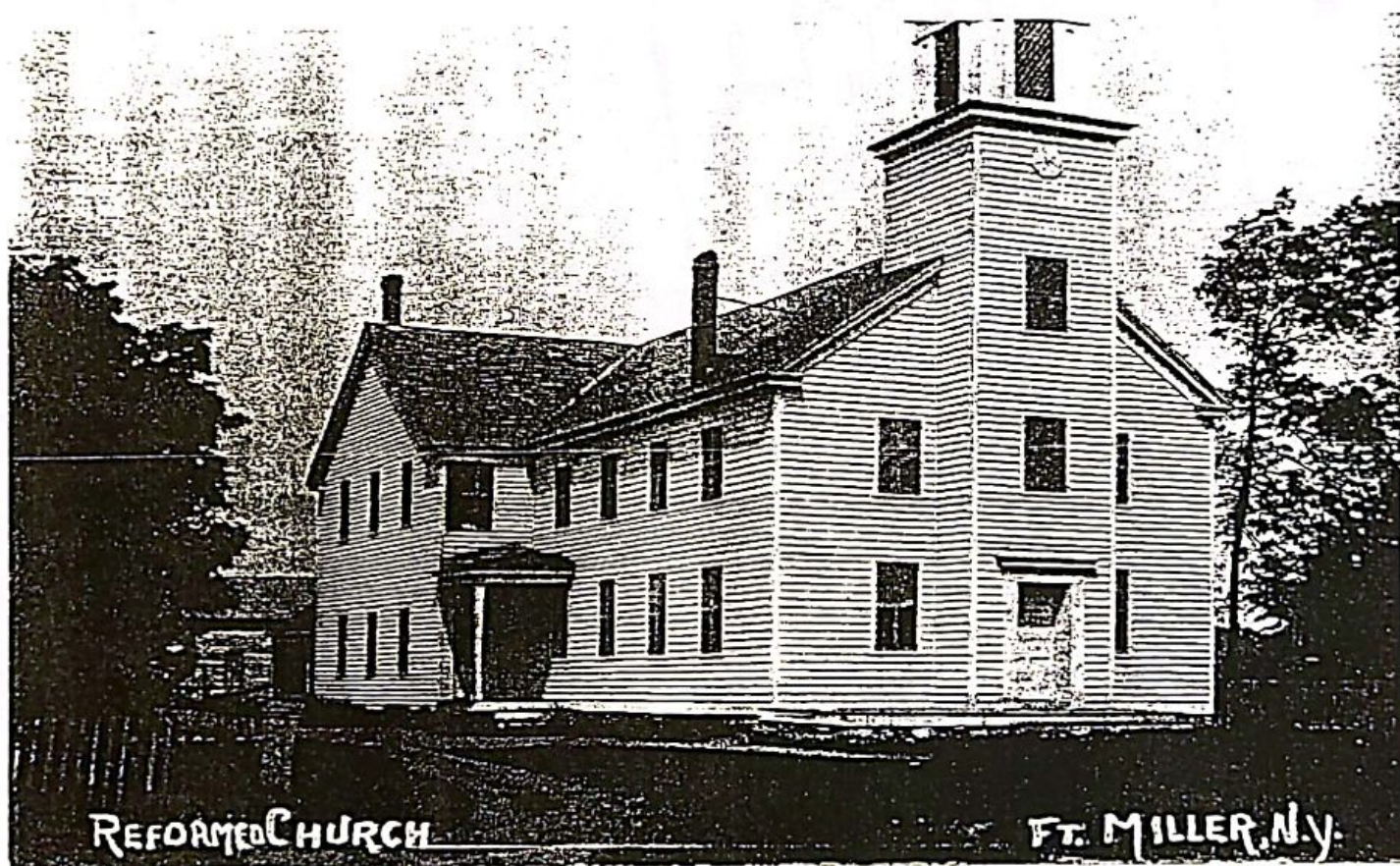
FORT MILLER REFORMED CHURCH COMPLEX
FORT EDWARD, WASHINGTON COUNTY, NY

View taken from FORT MILLER, N. Y.



HISTORIC VIEW (1909)

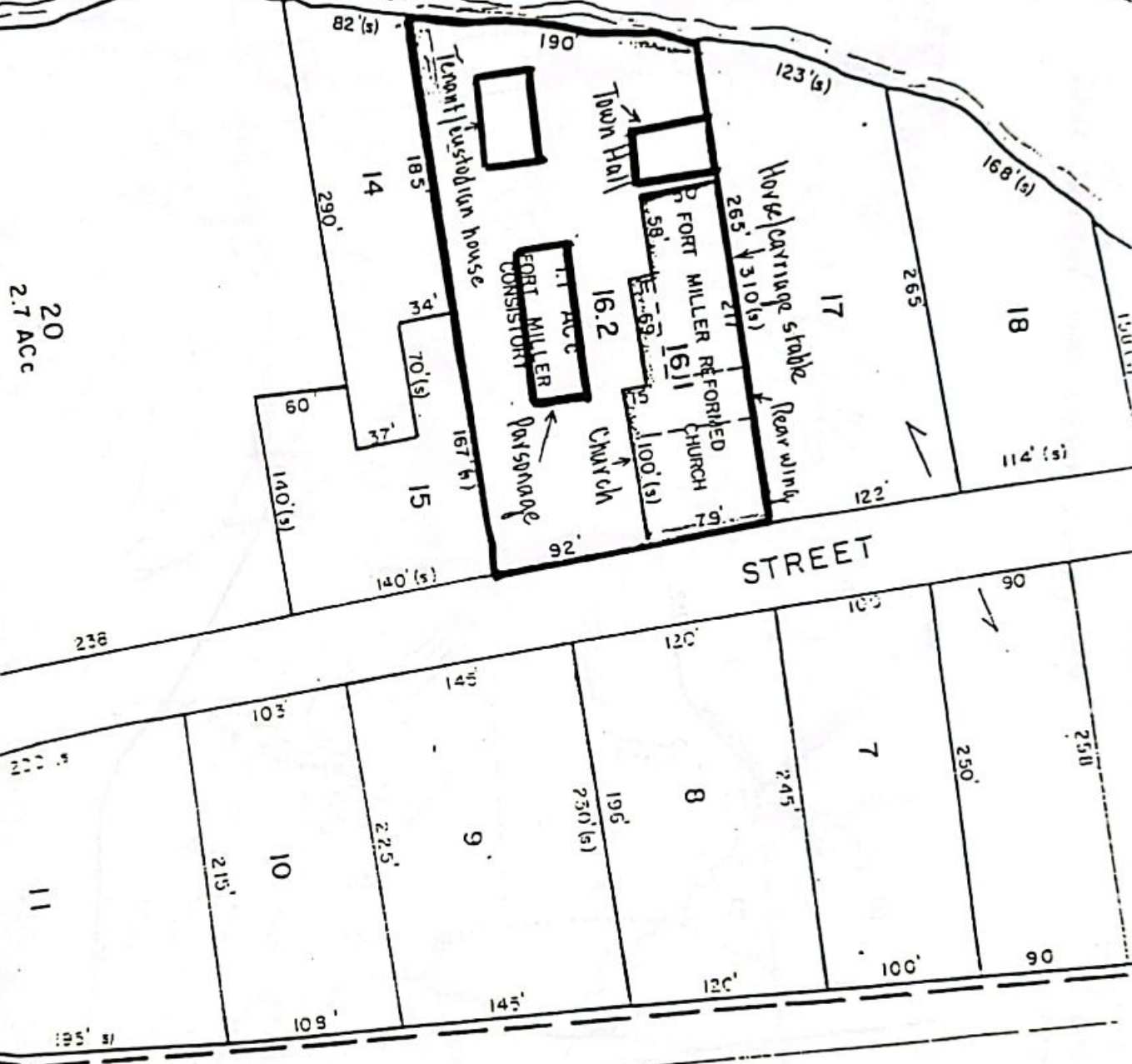
FORT MILLER REFORMED CHURCH COMPLEX
FORT EDWARD, WASHINGTON COUNTY, NY



HISTORIC VIEW (C.1910)

FORT MILLER REFORMED CHURCH COMPLEX
FORT EDWARD, WASHINGTON COUNTY, NY

COUNTY
FORT

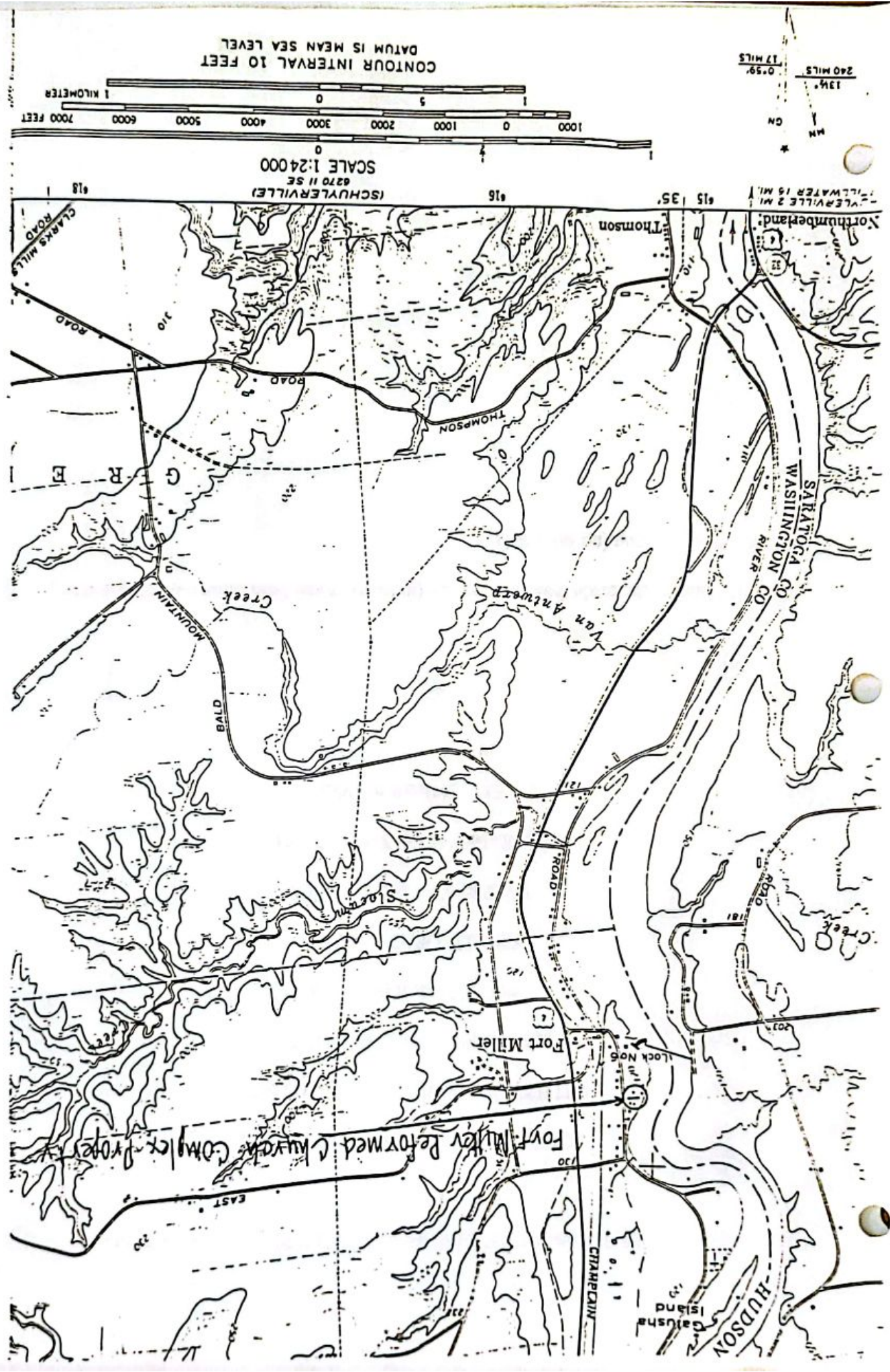


BARGE

Fort Miller Reformed Church
Fort Miller Rd.
Hamlet of Fort Miller
Town of Fort Edward
Washington County. NY

E: 615275
N: 4779756

Fort Miller Rd.
Fort Edward, Washington County, NY



CONTOUR INTERVAL 10 FEET
DATUM IS MEAN SEA LEVEL

SCALE 1:24000

(SCHUYLERVILLE)
4270 11 SE

240 MILES
134° 17' 00" W
0° 59' 00" N

Northumberland
Saratoga Co
Washington Co
River

Thompson

Thompson

Creek

Bald

Slack

Fort Miller

Fort Miller Reformed Church Complex Property

CHAMPAIN

HUDSON
Galusha Island

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES PLAQUE WORDING

FORT MILLER REFORMED CHURCH
WITH ITS PROPERTIES ON THIS SITE
HAS BEEN PLACED ON THE
NATIONAL REGISTER
OF HISTORIC PLACES
BY THE UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
DECEMBER 6, 1996

12" x 15" Rectangle, made from cast bronze (includes round head brass mounting screws)

\$195. + \$12. shipping (no sales tax)