

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

St. Paul's Lutheran Church,
Dutchess County, NY

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Statement of Significance

St. Paul's (Zion's) Evangelical Lutheran Church (St. Paul's Lutheran Church) is architecturally significant as a distinctive and highly intact example of Romanesque Revival ecclesiastical architecture in Dutchess County. Built in 1889-90, the church reflects new ideas about ecclesiastical design, specifically the Akron Plan which was promoted by the architect of the church, Lawrence B. Valk and Son. The church embodies numerous design features that reflect the eclectic interpretations of the Romanesque Revival style in small, rural churches in this period, including the heavy masonry construction, rounded arches for window and door openings, archivolt molding, facade flanked by a square tower, wall surfaces that are broad and smooth, and a rounded stair tower. The period of significance for the church complex is from 1813 to 1939, from the earliest dated headstone in the cemetery to the last acquisition of additional property.

The history of Red Hook begins sometime before 1688, when Colonel Pieter Schuyler, first Mayor of Albany, acquired from the Indians most of what is now the town of Red Hook. Schuyler did not live here himself and apparently there was little settlement or clearing of the land. By 1725, Schuyler's tract had changed ownership and was controlled jointly by Colonel Henry Beekman, Jr. (the son of the founder of Rhinebeck), Barent van Benthuyssen, Barent Staats, and Nicholas Hoffman. The land was settled by Palatine German families moving down from East Camp (Germantown) as they started to take leaseholds and develop an agricultural economy.

At the time of the Revolution, there was a small settlement at Upper Red Hook (then known as Red Hook), docks on the Hudson River at Tivoli (Upper Red Hook Landing) and Barrytown (Lower Red Hook Landing), and saw mills and grist mills on the "Kills" (streams). The Albany Post Road was the only road of significance, supplementing it were the roads to the mills and the river landings. Throughout the 18th century and the early 19th century, most of the land in the town was still owned by heirs and assigns of the patent holders, and was leased for long terms to farming families.

When the Rhinebeck Precinct of Dutchess County was established in 1737 for the purpose of defining political jurisdiction, Red Hook was included. It became a separate township on June 2, 1812. Until the end of the 18th century, the neighborhood of the present village of Red Hook was merely a crossroads, boasting little more than a tavern and a couple of houses. During the 19th century, the village grew rapidly in population and commercial activity. The village itself was not incorporated until 1894.

St. Paul's Lutheran Church is historically associated with the "Palatine Emigration" of the early 1700's, when hundreds of families emigrated to the Hudson Valley of New York State who were fleeing from the Rhenish or Lower Palatinate area of Germany and the devastation in the aftermath of the Thirty Years War. The church is the lineal successor of the Zion German Reformed Church which was the reformed side of the original German Church

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founded by the Lutherans and Calvinists (Reformed Protestants) in the Rhinebeck district during 1715. In 1729, disagreements divided the two church groups and they separated.

In 1796, a five-acre parcel of land was sold by General John Armstrong of Rhinebeck and his wife Alida to George Adam Shook, Anthony Stratt, and Nicholas Hoffman for the purposes of establishing a church. The five-acre plot was then known as Hardscrabble and is now part of Red Hook village. In the period between July 8, 1800 and September 26, 1802 the Rhinebeck church moved to the Red Hook property. It was still called the Rhinebeck German Reformed Church. The Palatine descendants first built a frame church on this site that was severely damaged by a wind storm and replaced by a stone church in 1834. It is not known how soon after 1796 the cemetery was established, but the earliest existing stone dates from 1813.

In 1846, the members of the German Reformed Church in Red Hook were unable to sustain a Reformed pastor and joined the Lutherans. Thereafter, the church in Red Hook village was known as the First Evangelical Lutheran Congregation. The name changed again in 1914, when the congregation petitioned the Supreme Court to permit a change in corporate name to St. Paul's (Zion's) Evangelical Lutheran Church.

In 1886, the need for repairing or replacing the stone church building became pressing and the pastor, Reverend S. A. Weikert, was authorized to solicit funds for a new church. The stone church was demolished in 1889, during construction of the existing brick church. Members of the congregation dug a new cellar and contractor Daniel Van De Bogart laid up a new fieldstone foundation during July of that year. Floor timbers were laid during August, 1889 under the supervision of William Kipp. Identified suppliers for the new church were: rose window and other windows - G. S. Harvey of Brooklyn; memorial windows in chancel - J. & R. Lamb of New York City; ashlar brownstone - A. J. Felty of Brooklyn; corrugated iron for ceilings - Wm. D. Wines of New York City; slate - American Bangor Slate Co.; pews with curved backs and seats - Globe Furniture Co. of Michigan; mill work for the church - Wm. H. Traver of Hudson; pulpit, stalls, and chairs - J. & R. Lamb of New York City; and the bell weighing 1,124 pounds - Meneely & Co. of Troy. The total cost of the building was \$18,650.

The period from 1920 to World War II was an active one for St. Paul's Lutheran Church. Generosity in contributions to the church's endowment fund insured its perpetuation. In 1939, the holdings increased to a total of 14.9 acres which included an enlarged cemetery together with a cemetery caretaker's residence and a cemetery office building.

With the exception of electric lighting that was added during 1906, installation of plumbing, carpeting of the chancel and aisles in 1911, a hardwood floor added in 1911, a new organ in 1914, replacement of slate roofing in the 1970s, addition of a chimney, the removal of a porte cochere, and modification of the original cellar during 1956-57 by the construction

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residence, acquired by the church in 1939 along with property to expand the cemetery, is a representative example of late-18th century residential architecture in Dutchess County. The cemetery is unusually large for a village church property and contains a complete range of tombstones from 1813 to the present. Although there are no stones of outstanding merit, of particular note is one zinc monument (c. 1880) and a number of early-19th century sandstone markers. Buried in the cemetery are several thousand residents of the Red Hook area and communicants of the church, many with names reflecting the Dutch and German heritage of the community.