

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# DRAFT

## National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *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 the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional 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 Zion Episcopal Church

other names/site number Zion Church

name of related multiple property listing N/A

### 2. Location

street & number 55 Cedar Street [ ] not for publication

city or town Dobbs Ferry [ ] vicinity

state New York code NY county Westchester code 119 zip code 10522

### 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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 as 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.)

Signature of certifying official/Title

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.)

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

### 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

[ ] entered in the National Register

[ ] 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) \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of the Keeper

date of action

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



Name of Property

County and State

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

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

- [ ] A Property 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.)

- [ X ] A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
[ ] B removed from its original location
[ ] C a birthplace or grave
[ ] D a cemetery
[ ] E a reconstructed building, object, or structure
[ ] F a commemorative property
[ ] G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years

Narrative Statement of Significance

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

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

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 Building Survey #
[ ] recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #

Areas of Significance:

(Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance:

1833 - 1963

Significant Dates:

1833-34, 1853-54, 1870, 1888, 1963

Significant Person:

N/A

Cultural Affiliation:

N/A

Architect/Builder:

McVickar, Rev. William A. (1850s addition)

Primary location of additional data:

- [ ] State Historic Preservation Office
[ ] Other State agency
[ ] Federal Agency
[ ] Local Government
[ ] University
[ ] Other repository:

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of Property 1.87 acres

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 18 594753 4541094
Zone Easting Northing

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Emily R. Kahn, Edited by Chelsea Towers, Historic Preservation Program Analyst

organization date May 2020

street & number telephone

city or town New York state NY zip code 10027

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location
A Sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items

(Check with SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

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

name

street & number telephone

city or town state zip code

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 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, D.C. 20503

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Narrative Description of Property

**Summary Paragraph**

Zion Episcopal Church is located in Dobbs Ferry, an incorporated village in the Town of Greenburgh in Westchester County, New York. This ecclesiastical complex is situated near the top of a large hill along Cedar Street. The irregularly-shaped, approximately two-acre lot is bordered by Cedar Street to the northeast, Oak Street (formerly Church Street) to the southwest, and the Old Croton Aqueduct (NRHP 1974; NHL 1992) to the northwest, and it shares a lot line with the South Presbyterian Church (NRHP 2000) to the southeast. These streets are dominated by one- to three-story commercial buildings dating largely from the late-nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century. The church complex stands out from its immediate surroundings. From the high point of the property one can see views of the Hudson River to the west.

The Zion Episcopal Church complex has three contributing buildings—the church (1834 with later additions), the rectory (1783 with later additions), and the parish hall (1888 with later addition)—and a contributing stone wall (1868 with possible later addition) running along Cedar Street. There is a single entry to the complex via an uphill road, developed in 1875 and paved in 1952, off of Cedar Street, that connects to all three buildings. The Gothic Revival style church with bell tower is the focal point of the complex and is easily visible from the surrounding streets. The Late Gothic Revival parish hall complements the design and materials of the church with its use of similar random, rough-cut ashlar masonry and pointed-arches. The rectory is a Federal-era building that was significantly enlarged and remodeled in the Second Empire style with a mansard roof during the 1870s. All three buildings, the stone wall, and the complex as a whole retain their architectural integrity to a high degree.

**Zion Episcopal Church** (1834 with additions in 1853-54, 1870, & 1963, 1 contributing building)

The one-story, gable-roofed, Gothic Revival church building with two-story tower faces north toward Cedar Street. The church, as it is seen today, was largely constructed over four building campaigns (See the attached Zion Episcopal Church Expansions diagram). The small, northern-most original block of the church was completed in 1834 and consisted of a simple, two-bay-deep, front-gabled structure with pointed arch windows at the side elevations, a square, crenellated tower (altered and expanded later on) in the center, and a one-story, one-bay-wide, hipped roof block at the rear. It is easy to discern the original block by its stonework. Although the entire building is clad with random, rough-cut ashlar masonry, the stone on the original portion of the building is brownish-pink while the stone on the later additions is gray. In 1853-1854, the church was expanded southward with the addition of three bays, carefully maintaining the original Gothic Revival appearance and use of stone of the original church. By 1855 the original tower has been modified with an upper story and a cross-gabled roof. As the congregation grew the church expanded yet again to the south in 1870, when it acquired its current modified cruciform design with the addition of transept-like wings and a polygonal chancel. The last change to the church was the removal of a small, front-gabled, entrance porch in front of the belltower and the construction of a front-gabled, stone narthex block in 1963.

The church in its current form has a modified cruciform plan and is comprised of a narthex, nave, chancel, and rectangular, transept-like wings. While these wings read like transepts from the exterior, they house distinct rooms – a pipe room and a sacristy - separate from the nave and chancel at the interior. All of the window and

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door openings on the church, unless otherwise noted, have classical Gibbs surrounds of brick keyed into the stonework and brownstone sills.

The façade can be read in three sections: the entrance block (which houses the narthex), the tower, and the nave block. The north façade features a slate-roofed, front-gabled center entrance pavilion and tall belltower behind it. This entrance pavilion provides access to the narthex. A steep set of stairs lead up a pair of wood doors with recessed panels featuring ornamental “x” patterns. The doors are crowned by a pointed-arch transom with decorative latticework muntins. Additionally, there is a rectangular entrance near grade level on each side elevation of the entrance pavilion. Although one-story with a crenelated parapet prior to 1853, the tower is now two-stories high with a copper-clad gable roof with lower cross gables at side elevations. Each gable is topped with an iron cross finial. The tower is supported by stepped stone buttresses that abut the back of the entrance pavilion. On the façade at the lower level of the tower is a diamond-shaped stone opening with a stone roundel featuring fish-bladder tracery. The side elevations at the lower level of the tower each have a wooden, pointed-arch, louvred opening. The belfry, set above a cornice consisting of three courses of canted stonework, has a pair of triangular-arched, louvred openings on the front and rear elevations and a single opening on the side elevations. The openings on the second story of the tower do not have keyed brick enframements. Below the gabled roof on each elevation, there is a traceried rectangular stone panel set at a forty-five degree angle. The panels on the side elevations have fish bladders, the panel on the front has a six-pointed star, and the panel on the rear elevation has a quatrefoil. The belfry contains a bell donated in 1919. The front wall of the nave block is set behind the tower. It has no openings and no ornamentation other than a wooden Classical pediment that is broken by the tower which intersects at its center.

The long nave block has a low-pitched gable roof with slate shingles and copper flashing. The side elevations of the nave block are almost identical on both the west and the east elevations. The fenestration is arranged in an irregular manner. There are three unevenly-spaced pointed-arch windows, each comprised of a pair of lancets. The masonry changes from brownish-pink to grey in between the second and third windows. Following a large space after the third window, there is a pair of elongated, lancet windows that do not have enframements. Above the windows, there is a wooden cornice that aligns with the broken pediment on the front of the nave block. The main difference between the two side elevations is a gable-roofed frame entrance with a pointed-arch doorway and ornamental carved bargeboard in between the third pointed-arch window and pair of lancet windows on the east elevation. Additionally on the east elevation, there is a projecting horizontal masonry band that ends in a curve made to look like a bishop’s crook stretching from the north side of the east wing to the pointed-arch doorway. On the west elevation, there is a square brick chimney laid in stretcher bond at the end of the nave behind the rectangular wing.

Rectangular transept-like wings project from the side elevations near the south end of the church. The slate-shingled, gable-roofed east wing is taller but not as deep as the west wing. The east elevation of this wing has a pointed-arch window with a pair of lancets and a carved trefoil. The north side of the wing has a short, Tudor-arch window with a pair of narrow, rectangular panes. The south side of the wing has an off-center elongated pointed-arch doorway.

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The west wing has a slate-shingled hip roof with a wooden cornice. Each elevation of this wing has a Tudor-arch opening with a triplet of narrow, rectangular windows. Additionally, the south side of the wing has a rectangular wooden door set within a pointed arch that abuts the chancel.

The rear, south elevation of the church consists of the chancel block with a slate-shingled, polygonal, hip roof, copper flashings, and a narrow wood cornice. The focal point of the chancel is the tall, tripartite window with three lancets. The window projects above the cornice line of the chancel with a curved pointed arch. The walls on the angled sides of the chancel block contain single, pointed-arch windows.

The simple interior of Zion Episcopal Church has remained largely intact since it was renovated in 1870. Entering from the narthex through a doorway with double doors, there is a rectangular nave with a central aisle leading to the polygonal chancel. The nave has plaster walls with wood wainscoting in the lower portion and king-post trusses supporting a wood ceiling. The walls are punctuated by recessed stained glass windows and have plaques detailing historical persons, events, and donations. The shallow chancel is separated from the nave by two steps. At the back of the chancel is a large tripartite stained-glass window with imagery of Jesus Christ caring for children—the focal point of the church's interior. There are two additional stained-glass windows on opposite sides of the chancel, designed by R. Geissler Inc. The chancel has a polygonal ceiling divided into panels by thin ribs. The church retains its mid-to-late nineteenth century pews, wood floor boards, and altar, as well as its early-twentieth-century electric light fixtures. To the east of the chancel is a pipe room. To the west is a sacristy accessible from the chancel through a pointed-arch doorway. The sacristy has a triplet of rectangular diamond-paned, leaded-glass windows with a pointed-arch enframement on the south, west, and north walls.

**Rectory** (1783 with 1870s additions, 1 contributing building)

Zion Episcopal Church acquired a wood-frame 1783 dwelling on an adjacent lot in 1865 and renovated and expanded it in stages from 1870-76. The additions largely consisted of a two-story rear expansion and a mansard roof which dramatically increased the size of the original building. Located near the back of the lot along Oak Street, the rectory is a northeast-facing wood frame, three-story house that reads largely as a Second Empire residence today due to its mansard roof. It sits on a sloping site so that the northwest elevation has a high basement and the rear elevation to the southwest has a low basement. In the 1920s, the entire building was clad with stucco, today painted light yellow. All of the windows, except at the basement level, have double-hung sash.

The three-bay-wide façade has regular fenestration and a center entrance bay. The projecting entrance was added as part of the 1870s renovations. The entrance is topped by a hip roof and a carved wooden frieze. The entrance door has been replaced but is still surrounded by period trim. Each side of the entrance is flanked by a six-over-six window. The second story has three evenly-spaced six-over-six windows with dark green louvered wooden shutters, and the third story mansard has three dormer windows with shed roofs.

The northwest elevation has a French Second Empire style wooden porch above a basement level which has been filled-in with windows. The porch is divided into four, evenly-spaced sections by chamfered posts. The middle two sections of the porch project out further than the outer two sections. Each section is further

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delineated by a pair of ornamental, scroll-saw brackets. The railing at the base of the porch is punched with quatrefoils located above elongated pointed arches. The center of the porch roof was converted into a terrace in the 1990s. This elevation has an asymmetrical fenestration with irregularly-spaced rectangular window openings. The three windows on the first story – two with six-over-six, and one with two-over-four, double-hung sash – are evenly spaced. At the west end of the elevation next to the two-over-four window is a door with sidelights. The second story has three six-over-six windows, and the third story mansard has three dormer windows with shed roofs. On both upper stories, there is a large space between the second and third windows.

The southeast elevation has remained more intact than the northwest elevation. It has three evenly-spaced bays on each story. The first story has a centrally-located entrance with a hood. There is a two-over-four window to the south of the entrance. Further to the south, there is a six-over-six window. To the east of the entrance, there is a three-sided bay window. This bay window echoes the central entrance of the façade with its slate roof and a carved wooden frieze. On the second and third stories respectively, there are three evenly-spaced six-over-six windows and shed-roof dormer windows.

The rear elevation, part of the 1870s addition, is the least ornate elevation and has an irregular fenestration. During the renovations, the rear wall was extended back to create space for an additional large room on each existing story. The raised basement and first story share the same fenestration, although the window types vary. On these levels, there is one window to the west followed by a large space and then a pair of windows to the south. The first and second stories both have six-over-six windows. The second story has two window openings – one aligned with the west window and the other centered between the pair of windows on the first story and raised basement. The third story mansard has an evenly-spaced fenestration with two dormer windows with shed roofs on either side of a central, stretcher bond brick chimney.

The mansard roof is more intricate than the rest of the house. The roof has alternating sections of diamond- and rectangular-shaped slate tiles. There are two brick chimneys in addition to the chimney on the rear elevation atop the roof.

As a result of the addition of the third-story mansard and two large rooms on the rear in the 1870s, the rectory grew substantially in size. Still, the original portion of the building has retained a modified central-hall plan. While the top two stories retain their historic function as a rectory, the first story now serves as office space and a rental unit. The interior has undergone significant alterations, but many of the original Federal-style fireplace mantels remain intact, including two wooden mantels and a black marble mantel on the first floor.

**Parish Hall** (1888 with early-20th century addition, 1 contributing building)

The parish hall, located west of the church, is a one-story, cross-gable, Late Gothic Revival building with a raised basement built into the slope of the hill. Originally an L-shaped building, the rear wing was added at some point between 1914 and 1931 to create a cruciform footprint. The parish hall has random, rough-cut, rock-faced ashlar masonry that matches the stonework on the additions of the church. All of the windows and door openings have red brick enframements that are keyed into the stonework, splayed lintels, and brownstone sills. The red bricks contrast in color and texture with the stone. The windows on the first story are more elongated than the windows at the raised basement. The building has a steeply-pitched, slate-shingled roof, recently-

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replaced to match historic materials, topped by a cupola located at the intersection of the cross gables. The cupola has a slate base followed by a wood section with two pairs of cusped openings on each elevation. The tower is topped with a pyramidal copper roof capped by a metal finial.

Each elevation is divided into three sections with a gable front in the central section. The north and south elevations have recessed symmetrical wings extending to the east and west. The east and west elevations have recessed asymmetrical wings extending to the north and south. On the east and west elevations, the north wing is much narrower than the south wing.

The façade of the parish hall faces the west wing of the church. The central section has a protruding square chimney that pierces the peak of the gable. Inlaid within the stone in the center of the chimney is a brownstone plaque dedicating the parish hall as the "Reese Memorial Building." On the north side of the chimney beginning above the plaque there is a brownstone stepped buttress on top of which the chimney narrows asymmetrically. The top third of the chimney is divided into three vertical sections. The central section is flush with the lower portion of the chimney while the side sections are set back. The setback on each side is marked by two brownstone buttress caps. To the north of the chimney in the central section of the façade, there is a rectangular double-hung window. To the south of the chimney is the building's main entrance. It is located above three brownstone steps and has a wide pointed-arch door with ornate iron strapwork hinges and a red brick compound, pointed-arch enframement. There is a short, brownstone stepped buttress to the south of the entrance. The south section of the façade has a bipartite rectangular window to the south and tripartite rectangular window to the north on both the raised basement and the first story. The north section of the façade has a narrow rectangular window on the raised basement and a narrow rectangular window horizontally divided into two units on the first story. Both the north and south sections of the façade are built into the slope of the hill which partially obscures the raised basement. Additionally, due to the parish hall's location in relation to the west wing of the church, the north section largely is obscured when facing the parish hall from the road on the Zion complex, giving the illusion that the façade only has two sections.

The south elevation focuses on a large segmental-arch window with four narrow vertical cusped sections in the central section of the elevation. The outer two sections of this window are divided horizontally by wooden muntins into four units whereas the inner two sections of this window are divided horizontally by wooden muntins into three units. Below this window, there is a smaller segmental-arch basement window with four rectangular sections divided horizontally into two units. Above the large segmental-arch window below the peak of the gable, there is a small, bricked-in rectangular opening with two vertical sections. The east section of the south elevation has a pair of rectangular basement windows and a central triplet of lancet windows on the first story. The west section of the south elevation has two tripartite rectangular windows, one on the basement level and one on the first story.

The rear elevation faces west with direct views to the Hudson River. It has a central, protruding square chimney that pierces the peak of the gable. The chimney is symmetrical in its massing. The upper portion of the chimney, beginning just above the second story, narrows. At the point where the chimney narrows, it is flanked, on either side, by two brownstone buttress caps. The chimney is situated in between two simple bipartite rectangular basement windows and two bipartite windows on the first story. The south section of the rear elevation has the

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same rhythm as the south section of the façade. At the raised basement, there is an at grade level intricate door with rectangular window openings to the north and a bipartite rectangular window to the south. The first story of the south section has a bipartite rectangular window to the south and tripartite rectangular window to the north. The north section of the rear elevation is identical to the north section on the façade with a narrow rectangular window at the raised basement and a narrow rectangular window horizontally divided into two units on the first story.

The central section of the north elevation focuses on a pair of large, elongated rectangular windows, each with two narrow, vertical cusped sections divided vertically into three units, creating a sense of balance with the large segmental-arch window on the south elevation. Below these large rectangular windows are two shorter rectangular basement windows each divided into two, six-paned rectangular sections. Above the large rectangular windows below the peak of the gable, there is a bricked-in opening identical to the one on the central section of the south elevation. The east section of the north elevation has a tripartite rectangular basement window, filled in the center with a wooden louvered shutter. On the first story, there is a tripartite rectangular window with rectangular sections. The west section of the north elevation has a pointed-arch door with window openings. This door is located at the easternmost point of the west section and is immediately followed to the west by a small lancet window with two uneven rectangular sections. Slightly off center to the east on the first story, there is a tripartite rectangular window.

The interior remains relatively intact and retains its original use as a space for educational, social, and religious gatherings. The basement is used as a parish thrift store. The first story consists of small rooms around a large, central multi-purpose hall. The central hall is contained within the north and south wings. The most prominent interior feature is the rounded open-truss wooden ceiling lined with narrow, wood beams. There is a stage raised four steps from the floor situated at the back of the north wing and an office space. The rear and front wings are accessed from the hall via large, approximately six-foot-wide pointed-arch doors. Although the interior as a whole is simple, there are intricate lead-paned as well as stained-glass windows.

**Stone Wall** (1868 with possible later addition in early 20<sup>th</sup> century, 1 contributing structure)

There is a low, stone wall on the northeast side of the complex that forms the boundary along Cedar Street. The wall was built on grade using random, rough-cut ashlar masonry that references the masonry used for the church. The stone wall ends at the entry drive near the east corner of the lot. Two identical stone pillars, about double the height of the stone wall at its east end, each capped with a marble slab, frame the front of the road. The west pillar abuts the east end of the stone wall. The rectangular-cut, regular ashlar masonry of these pillars suggests that they were added at an unknown later date, probably in the early twentieth century.

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**Statement of Significance:**

**Summary Paragraph**

The Zion Episcopal Church complex, located in Dobbs Ferry, Westchester County, New York, is architecturally significant under NRHP Criterion C as an architecturally distinguished nineteenth-century ecclesiastical facility in the Hudson Valley. The central feature of the complex is the church, the oldest surviving Gothic Revival house of worship in Westchester County and the oldest extant religious building in Dobbs Ferry.<sup>1</sup> The establishment of this religious organization corresponded with the early nineteenth century development of Dobbs Ferry, and the church counted a number of notable figures among its membership during that time, prominent among them Peter Van Brugh Livingston, Washington Irving, and Alexander Hamilton's sons, James and Alexander Hamilton Jr. As first erected 1833-34, the church embodied the distinctive characteristics of early Gothic Revival religious design, as manifested in its straightforward, front-gabled form with engaged central tower; although possessed of distinctive Gothic details, that first iteration remained bound in some measure to classical influences and the Wren-Gibbs church type. The 1853-54 addition, designed by Rev. William A. McVickar, along with the 1870 expansion, represent the growth of the congregation and the evolution of Episcopal church architecture as influenced by the Ecclesiological movement. The current church is thus an amalgam of the original and subsequent nineteenth-century building campaigns, and it is distinguished by its masonry construction, the walls having been laid up in rough-hewn red and gray sandstone in irregular coursing, which furthers the picturesque effect of its architecture. Gothic detailing is restrained; as such, the church relies in large measure on its materials, pointed-arch openings, engaged buttresses, transept-like wings, polygonal-shaped chancel, and belltower for architectural effect. As with the exterior, the interior features all the expected hallmarks of the Gothic Revival movement as it relates to the Episcopal Church and the Ecclesiological movement in the middle decades of the nineteenth century. Those include the clear articulation between nave and chancel, the use of a center aisle around which pews are disposed, and the exposed roof trusses of the nave. The Late Gothic Revival parish hall, built in 1888, complements the church by virtue of its rustic stonework, red brick trim, similar Gothic ornamentation, and asymmetrical plan. The rectory, a 1783 dwelling, is believed to be the oldest surviving building in Dobbs Ferry, although it has undergone various expansions and renovations throughout its history; it was expanded and updated in the stylish Second Empire style when converted to the rectory in the 1870s. Together, these three historic buildings, along with an 1860s stone wall, curving drive, and open landscaped parcel, form an integrated church complex that retains a high degree of integrity of setting, design, materials, craftsmanship, feeling, and association. The period of significance encompasses the full development of the church complex over time, initiated with the construction of Zion Episcopal Church in 1833-34 and terminated with its last major addition in 1963.

**Early History of Dobbs Ferry and the Establishment of Religious Institutions**

The land that would later become the Village of Dobbs Ferry has been occupied since about 4000 B.C.E., when the Weckquasgeek—"Wickers Creek"—tribe of the Algonquin confederation settled along the Hudson River. The Weckquasgeek lived in what would become Dobbs Ferry until the early-seventeenth century. In 1609,

<sup>1</sup> Frank E. Sanchis, *American Architecture: Westchester County, New York, Colonial to Contemporary*, (Croton-on-Hudson: North River Press, 1977): 197.\_

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Henry Hudson explored the area on behalf of the Dutch East India Company. After a series of land exchanges, Dobbs Ferry became part of the Manor of Philipsburgh. Owned by Frederick Philipse, the Manor of Philipsburgh was comprised of tenant farms that contributed to local and triangular trade in the 1680s. Settlers came to Dobbs Ferry for farming, trade, and transportation opportunities as well as its spectacular river views.<sup>2</sup> The Dobbs family, as the village's name suggests, operated the first ferry from 1698 to 1759, although little is known about that important transportation development.<sup>3</sup>

Dobbs Ferry maintained an important strategic location along the Hudson River during the Revolutionary War, as George Washington and General Rochambeau planned a campaign and marched through Dobbs Ferry on their way to the Battle of Yorktown in 1781.<sup>4</sup> After the Revolution, the character of Dobbs Ferry began to change. The New York Legislature charged Philipse with treason for remaining loyal to the king and subsequently confiscated the Manor of Philipsburgh and divided it into parcels. In 1785, Philip Livingston purchased 233 acres of land.<sup>5</sup> The son of a prominent New York City merchant, Philip Livingston's arrival brought additional merchants to the area. Among them were Capt. John Smith, a sailing master who conducted trade between Dobbs Ferry and Manhattan, who built a house off of Oak Street in 1783.<sup>6</sup> That house, now likely the oldest surviving building in Dobbs Ferry, later became Zion Episcopal Church's rectory.

When Philip Livingston died in 1810, he left his land to his eldest son: Peter Van Brugh Livingston.<sup>7</sup> The formation of Zion Episcopal Church was one component of Peter Van Brugh Livingston's development of Dobbs Ferry. Livingston was an American diplomat who became the country's inaugural *chargé d'affaires* to Ecuador after he left Dobbs Ferry.<sup>8</sup> Prior to his departure in the 1840s, he worked to establish the new community; docks were constructed to facilitate trade and a street plan was developed in the unrealized hopes of renaming the village "Livingston's Landing."<sup>9</sup> Livingston significantly assisted Dobbs Ferry's advancement by donating the land for the village's first two religious organizations, South Presbyterian Church and Zion Episcopal Church.<sup>10</sup>

South Presbyterian Church, located on the adjacent land immediately south of Zion Episcopal Church, occupies a Gothic Revival church completed in 1869 (NRHP 2000). That congregation originally met in a small, wood-shingled meeting house on Livingston's land. Referred to as the "Old White Church," the original building, no longer extant, was completed in the Gothic style in 1825, although services had been held in one of Livingston's barns for several years prior.<sup>11</sup> Livingston served as the church's first presiding president; however, he left

<sup>2</sup> Judith Doolin Spikes and Anne Marie Leone, *Dobbs Ferry: Then & Now*, (Charleston: Arcadia Publishing, 2012), ix.

<sup>3</sup> Mary Agnes Parrell, *Profiles of Dobbs Ferry*, (Dobbs Ferry: Oceana Publications, 1976): 8.

<sup>4</sup> Richard Borkow, "Westchester County, New York and the Revolutionary War: The March Toward Yorktown (1781)," *Westchester Magazine*, June 14, 2013, <https://westchestermagazine.com/uncategorized/westchester-county-new-york-and-the-revolutionary-war-the-march-toward-yorktown-1781/>, accessed April 19, 2020.

<sup>5</sup> Parrell, *Profiles of Dobbs Ferry*, 23.

<sup>6</sup> Suzanne Dickinson Sanzo, "A History of the Zion Episcopal Church on the Occasion of its 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary," 1983: 5, <http://www.ziondobbsferry.org/historical-documents.html>.

<sup>7</sup> Parrell, *Profiles of Dobbs Ferry*, 25.

<sup>8</sup> William J. Blanck, *Life of a River Village: Dobbs Ferry: A Centennial Publication*, (Dobbs Ferry: Morgan Press Inc., 1974): 20.

<sup>9</sup> Parrell, *Profiles of Dobbs Ferry*, 27.

<sup>10</sup> Parrell, *Profiles of Dobbs Ferry*, 26.

<sup>11</sup> Parrell, *Profiles of Dobbs Ferry*, 26.

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South Presbyterian Church in the early 1830s, due to conflicts over temperance.<sup>12</sup> Avidly against alcohol consumption, Livingston decided to leave the church after it refused to compel all members to take a vow of abstinence from alcohol.<sup>13</sup> A number of parishioners followed Livingston.<sup>14</sup>

After leaving South Presbyterian Church, Livingston and the other parishioners joined the village's second religious organization, Zion Episcopal Church. The fledgling Episcopal congregation did not have a church building at that time; instead, it had been holding services in the village's schoolhouse since around 1830.<sup>15</sup> Every other week, Reverend A.N. Crosby of St. John's Church in Yonkers travelled to Dobbs Ferry to lead those services.<sup>16</sup> He would become the first rector of Zion Episcopal Church. Livingston had a significant impact on Zion, donating the land and some of the funds for the construction of a permanent church building.<sup>17</sup> Trinity Church in New York City also contributed money towards the church's construction, as it did for many other such fledgling organizations in that era. Zion Episcopal Church was incorporated into the Protestant Episcopal Church in the State of New York on October 31, 1833.<sup>18</sup> Although Livingston left Zion in the early-1840s following his conversion to Catholicism, he was one of the six individuals who signed the incorporation deed.<sup>19</sup> The church's name is a reference to the elevation of Livingston's land, as "Zion" translates to "holy hill" in Hebrew.<sup>20</sup>

**The First Decades of Zion Episcopal Church (1830s-1850s)**

Completed in 1834, the nominated church embodies the characteristics of the early Gothic Revival style, along with features that relate it to subsequent trends in Episcopal church design. There are three surviving early Gothic Revival churches in Westchester County: Zion Episcopal Church; Christ Episcopal Church in Tarrytown (NRHP 1987), 1836; and Saint Paul's Episcopal Church in Ossining (NRHP 1978), 1835.<sup>21</sup> Zion is the oldest of Westchester County's surviving Gothic Revival churches as well as the oldest extant religious building in Dobbs Ferry. The original portion of the church is classical in form and massing, employing symmetry, a rectangular plan, a low-pitched gable roof, and an engaged central tower. However, the church has distinctive Gothic features such as buttresses, quatrefoils, and Gothic arches. The choice of irregular masonry reflects the early Gothic Revival's tendency towards rough and dark finishes.<sup>22</sup> The church's hybrid classical-Gothic character indicates that the Gothic Revival had not yet reached maturity in America at the time of Zion's initial construction.

<sup>12</sup>Sanzo, "A History of the Zion Episcopal Church," 1.

<sup>13</sup>Blanck, *Life of a River Village*, 20.

<sup>14</sup>Parrell, *Profiles of Dobbs Ferry*, 56.

<sup>15</sup>Sanzo, "A History of the Zion Episcopal Church," 1. "Beginnings of Zion Church," n.d., Folder: Religion-Episcopal-Zion Episcopal Church, Dobbs Ferry Historical Society, Dobbs Ferry, NY.

<sup>16</sup>Parrell, *Profiles of Dobbs Ferry*, 70.

<sup>17</sup>Parrell, *Profiles of Dobbs Ferry*, 26.

<sup>18</sup>Sanzo, "A History of the Zion Episcopal Church," 2.

<sup>19</sup>Incorporation Zion Greenburgh, signed August 31, 1833, Box 192, Diocesan Archives at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, New York, NY.

<sup>20</sup>"Beginnings of Zion Church."

<sup>21</sup>Sanchis, *American Architecture: Westchester County*, 197.

<sup>22</sup>Sanchis, *American Architecture: Westchester County*, 197.

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Evidence suggests the new church's design was inspired by that of the Old White Church in Dobbs Ferry.<sup>23</sup> The Old White Church was also built in the early Gothic Revival style, with a rectangular plan, central tower, Gothic ornamentation, and pediment. Yet, unlike Zion and typical early Gothic Revival buildings, the Old White Church was wood-framed.<sup>24</sup> The builder of the Old White Church, as well as the builder or architect of Zion, remains unknown. Yet, it appears that when Livingston left South Presbyterian Church, he chose to build Zion in homage to the Old White Church, but using more permanent and expensive materials. Zion thus in some manner conveys the design of the Old White Church, which was demolished in the mid-to-late nineteenth century.

The original portion of the church had between sixteen and twenty pews, all of which were rented by individuals or families.<sup>25</sup> In addition to Livingston, other significant individuals were associated with Zion in its first decades. Two of Alexander Hamilton's sons, James and Alexander Jr., served on the vestry along with famed author Washington Irving. Irving moved to his much celebrated house "Sunnyside" (NHL 1962; NRHP 1966) in what is now Irvington, just north of Dobbs Ferry, in 1835.<sup>26</sup> He chose to worship at Zion after his close friend, Rev. William Creighton, became rector in 1836. Under Creighton, Irving served on the vestry and as a delegate to the Diocesan Convention from 1837 to 1843.<sup>27</sup> Irving's nephew, Oscar, also played a significant role in the church. He held lay services north of Dobbs Ferry in the 1830s before becoming an early supporter of Livingston and Zion.<sup>28</sup> A description of Zion Episcopal Church at its centennial praised Washington Irving and his family's influence: "the original building where Washington Irving worshipped is a part of the present edifice. Here the memories of this man of God who sought spiritual strength [*sic*] within the sacred walls of the Father's House will bring inspiration to those who love this great literary genius of the American people."<sup>29</sup>

**Development of a Church Complex (1850s-1880s)**

By 1850, Zion had outgrown its existing mid-1830s accommodations. The construction of the Croton Aqueduct from 1836 to 1842 and the arrival of the railroad to Dobbs Ferry in 1849 had led to the growth of the village's population.<sup>30</sup> The vestry obtained funds to enlarge the church, and it approved a resolution in April 1853 to extend the building at its rear. Zion's new rector, Rev. William A. McVickar, designed the church extension. Having studied the history of church architecture at Columbia University, McVickar served as the "the sole architect throughout these alterations."<sup>31</sup> His design enlarged the church from thirty feet to seventy feet in length. However, since the width of the church remained constant at twenty-four feet, the extension did not distract from the original portion of the church.<sup>32</sup> Although the stone of the extension differs slightly in color

<sup>23</sup>Photo insert of Old White Church in *Manual of the Presbyterian Church of Greenburgh*, New York: Rufus Adams, Stationer & Stream Printer, 1878, Folder: Pamphlets- Religion, Dobbs Ferry Historical Society, Dobbs Ferry, NY.

<sup>24</sup>"New York," *The Church Journal*, June 1, 1854, Diocesan Archives at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, New York, NY.

<sup>25</sup>Sanzo, "A History of the Zion Episcopal Church," 3.

<sup>26</sup>Blanck, *Life of a River Village*, 21.

<sup>27</sup>Zion Episcopal Church, "Vestry & Congregational Minutes," October 1837 (Collection of Zion Episcopal Church); Description of Zion Episcopal Church, post-1933, Folder: Religion-Episcopal-Zion Episcopal Church, Dobbs Ferry Historical Society, Dobbs Ferry, NY.

<sup>28</sup>Sanzo, "A History of the Zion Episcopal Church," 1.

<sup>29</sup>Description of Zion Episcopal Church, post-1933.

<sup>30</sup>Spikes & Leone, *Dobbs Ferry: Then & Now*, ix-x.

<sup>31</sup>Peter D. Shaver, "Church of St. Barnabas National Register Nomination," 1999; Robert Bolton, *History of the Protestant Episcopal Church, in the County of Westchester: From its Foundation, A.D. 1693 to A.D. 1853*, (New York: Stanford & Storms, 1855): 648.

<sup>32</sup>"New York," *The Church Journal*, June 1, 1854.

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from the original stone, the addition compliments the character of the original portion of the church. Pointed-arch openings articulate the sides of the nave, creating a cohesive transition from the original portion of the building to the addition. McVickar also doubled the size of the tower by adding a second story. His plans called for the removal of the crenelated parapet but retained the tower's styling by adding Gothic tracery panels and Tudor arches on each side of the tower's addition.

McVickar's extension accommodated over a hundred additional worshippers.<sup>33</sup> Notably, whereas all of the original pews were "owned by rich men," the church now had at least seventy open seats for free, allowing a more diverse population to attend services at Zion.<sup>34</sup> The renovations aligned with architectural trends in the Episcopal Church. In 1841, the *Ecclesiologist* documented the need to restructure the chancel in order to create a spatial division between the clergy and the congregants.<sup>35</sup> At Zion, the original chancel was formed by railing off roughly fifteen feet of the newly-constructed nave.<sup>36</sup>

On the interior, aesthetic in addition to ecclesiastical changes are apparent in the 1853-54 renovation. Robert Bolton, in *The History of the Protestant Episcopal Church, in the County of Westchester*, called the interior "very pleasing, though plain."<sup>37</sup> Numerous Gothic features were added at that time. As was common in Gothic buildings, the nave was spanned by a trussed wood ceiling, while the ceiling over the chancel had thin tracery.<sup>38</sup> The interior was further enhanced with the addition of stained glass, greatly contributing to the high artistic effect of the interior. Owen Doremus designed the window at the center of the chancel, which contains biblical imagery of Jesus Christ assisting children. Although little known today, Doremus was one of the first artists to manufacture stained glass in America, and his work appeared in churches across the Northeast.<sup>39</sup> Referring to Doremus's window at Zion, Bolton, a relative of pioneering American stained-glass artist William Jay Bolton, stated that he had "never seen any glass in this country superior to this specimen of the skill of Doremus."<sup>40</sup> That window remains a focal point of Zion's interior, serving as an uncommon example of surviving pre-opalescent stained glass in America.<sup>41</sup> The year after the completion of these expansions and renovations, the church's location was praised as "one of the most commanding in the country."<sup>42</sup>

As early as 1850, Zion had sought to acquire a rectory, but that goal was not achieved until 1866.<sup>43</sup> In June 1865, Reverend Henry Williams resigned as Zion's rector; although he had considered Zion to be "a rare little gem in many respects," he nevertheless left due to the lack of a rectory.<sup>44</sup> He intended to find a wife but had no

<sup>33</sup>Zion Episcopal Church, "Vestry & Congregational Minutes," April 23, 1853 (Collection of Zion Episcopal Church).

<sup>34</sup>Bolton, *History of the Protestant Episcopal Church*, 649.

<sup>35</sup>Cambridge Camden Society, "The Necessity of Chancels," *The Ecclesiologist* 1 (1841): 40-41.

<sup>36</sup>Bolton, *History of the Protestant Episcopal Church*, 649.

<sup>37</sup>Bolton, *History of the Protestant Episcopal Church*, 648.

<sup>38</sup>Bolton, *History of the Protestant Episcopal Church*, 648-649.

<sup>39</sup>Linda Mary Papanicolaou, "Owen Doremus (1819-78): Another Pre-Opalescent American Stained Glass Maker," *Stained Glass: Quarterly of the Stained Glass Association of America* 89 (Fall 1994): 189.

<sup>40</sup>Bolton, *History of the Protestant Episcopal Church*, 650.

<sup>41</sup>Papanicolaou, "Owen Doremus," 224.

<sup>42</sup>"New York-Zion Church, Greenburgh," 1854, Diocesan Archives at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, New York, NY.

<sup>43</sup>Zion Episcopal Church, "Vestry & Congregational Minutes," April 11, 1850 (Collection of Zion Episcopal Church).

<sup>44</sup>Zion Episcopal Church, "Vestry & Congregational Minutes," June 1865 (Collection of Zion Episcopal Church).

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“home to take her to.”<sup>45</sup> The month after Williams resigned, the vestry began discussing plans for a rectory again and, by the end of July, Zion gained authorization to purchase the former Capt. John Smith House on the adjoining lot to the south for use as a rectory.<sup>46</sup> The sale was finalized in July 1866.<sup>47</sup> At the time of sale, the wood-frame house, dating to 1783, was a two-story building with wood clapboard exterior.<sup>48</sup> With the purchase of the rectory, Zion became a multi-building church complex. By the mid-1870s, the complex had been formalized through grading the grounds, adding the ashlar masonry retaining wall in front of the church, installing a road on the complex, and constructing a horse barn (demolished).<sup>49</sup>

Expansions to the church and rectory occurred jointly around 1870. The church was expanded to accommodate an additional fifty people.<sup>50</sup> Rectangular wings were added to the sides of the nave to provide space for an organ and for vestry rooms.<sup>51</sup> The existing chancel was replaced with a polygonal-shaped version. Originally, the vestry proposed the extensions be constructed of wood; however, they decided that “hav[ing] the same stone material... would be so much better in the end.”<sup>52</sup> Due to this decision to expand upon the existing material and style, the 1870s addition is relatively seamless with the 1854 addition. With the exception of the ceiling, the interior was redesigned at this time, and Doremus’ window was relocated to the center of the renovated chancel. The interior currently largely retains its 1870s appearance.<sup>53</sup> Additionally, the rectory was enlarged and renovated in the Second Empire style, following architectural trends of the time. A two-story expansion at the rear, third story mansard roof, and side porch were all added to the building, although the character of the original residence remains visible in the fenestration.

The last major addition to Zion’s complex was the parish hall, completed in 1888. The congregation had long expressed the need for a space for Sunday school and meetings. In addition to the lack of a rectory, Reverend Williams cited the lack of Sunday school rooms as one of the problems Zion faced.<sup>54</sup> Following the death of Rev. George B. Reese—Zion’s rector from 1865 to 1885, who oversaw the development of the church complex—the vestry decided to build a “handsome” parish hall in his name.<sup>55</sup> Designed in a Late Gothic Revival idiom, the cross-gabled parish hall references the church’s pointed-arch openings and rough-faced ashlar masonry in a sophisticated manner. The building’s utilization of asymmetry, rich contrast between grey stone and red brick dressings, and its other architectural features are characteristic of the Late Gothic Revival mode. This building’s sophistication suggests it was designed by an architect, although none is presently

<sup>45</sup>Zion Episcopal Church, “Vestry & Congregational Minutes,” June 1865 (Collection of Zion Episcopal Church).

<sup>46</sup>Zion Episcopal Church, “Vestry & Congregational Minutes,” December 6, 1865 (Collection of Zion Episcopal Church).

<sup>47</sup>Zion Episcopal Church, “Vestry & Congregational Minutes,” July 30, 1866 (Collection of Zion Episcopal Church).

<sup>48</sup>Sanzo, “A History of the Zion Episcopal Church,” 5.

<sup>49</sup>Sanzo, “A History of the Zion Episcopal Church,” 7.

<sup>50</sup>Zion Episcopal Church, “Vestry & Congregational Minutes,” July 13, 1870 (Collection of Zion Episcopal Church).

<sup>51</sup>Sanzo, “A History of the Zion Episcopal Church,” 6.

<sup>52</sup>Zion Episcopal Church, “Vestry & Congregational Minutes,” July 13, 1870 (Collection of Zion Episcopal Church).

<sup>53</sup>“Zion Episcopal Church Interior,” early-20<sup>th</sup> century, M-584 & M-585, Westchester County Historical Society, Elmsford, NY,

<https://westchester.pastperfectonline.com/photo/D5A07633-15D2-4885-A38C-539921506230>.

<sup>54</sup>Zion Episcopal Church, “Vestry & Congregational Minutes,” June 1865 (Collection of Zion Episcopal Church).

<sup>55</sup>“To Donate Sunday School Building,” *The Yonkers Statesman*, September 21, 1887, Diocesan Archives at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, New York, NY.

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known. Nevertheless, it has been documented that Thomas Murphy of Irvington served as the mason and that Anthony Lester executed the carpentry.<sup>56</sup>

Notably, it was women parishioners who spearheaded the fundraising for the 1870s renovations of the rectory and expansion as well as the construction of the parish hall. Female members refurnished the interior of the church through the proceeds of a festival they conducted. The funds for the purchase and expansion of the rectory were donated by a female parishioner. The vestry did not name this woman publicly, but it is believed that the donor was Reverend Reese's wife.<sup>57</sup> Reese's wife also donated over \$20,000 to build the parish hall, dedicated as the "George B. Reese Memorial Building."<sup>58</sup> The ongoing leadership of women in shaping the church complex may have been one of the reasons the *Yonkers Statesman* called Zion "one of the most progressive religious bodies in the township" in 1887.<sup>59</sup>

**"Mother of Churches"**

Since its first years, Zion Episcopal Church has fostered the development of the Episcopal Church along the Hudson River. Deemed the "Mother of Churches," Zion was instrumental in forming three nearby churches: Christ Church in Tarrytown (NRHP 1987), Grace Church in Hastings-on-Hudson, and St. Barnabas Church in Irvington (NRHP 1999).<sup>60</sup> All of those churches are now independent, but their association with Zion demonstrates that the church was a pioneer in the creation of offshoot Episcopal organizations in the region.

Zion quickly began branching out to adjacent communities. Upon his arrival at Zion in 1836, Reverend Creighton started to hold services in Tarrytown.<sup>61</sup> Christ Church was completed in 1837 and, like Zion, is an early example of Gothic Revival architecture in Westchester.<sup>62</sup> At that time, Reverend Creighton became the rector of both Christ Church and Zion Episcopal Church. He, as well as vestryman Washington Irving, transferred to Christ Church full-time in 1845.<sup>63</sup>

In the 1850s, Zion Episcopal Church helped form St. Barnabas Church and Grace Church. St. Barnabas was designed in 1852 by Zion's Reverend McVickar, as a chapel school for community members.<sup>64</sup> He converted the school into a chapel in 1858, becoming the full-time rector of St. Barnabas Church at that time.<sup>65</sup> Prior to leaving Zion for St. Barnabas, McVickar led services in Hastings-on-Hudson. Zion continued to support services in Hastings-on-Hudson until Zion Chapel, later renamed Grace Church, was built in 1868.<sup>66</sup> Zion Chapel was designed by Richard Upjohn, the central figure in mid-century Episcopal Church design, and was primarily funded by Admiral David Glasgow Farragut with money he received from the Union government for

<sup>56</sup>"The Memory of George B. Reese," *The Yonkers Statesman*, September 3, 1888, Diocesan Archives at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, New York, NY.

<sup>57</sup>Sanzo, "A History of the Zion Episcopal Church," 6.

<sup>58</sup>"Growing," *The Greenburgh Register*, October 19, 1888, Diocesan Archives at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, New York, NY.

<sup>59</sup>"To Donate Sunday School Building."

<sup>60</sup>"Zion: 'Mother of Churches,'" n.d., Folder: Religion-Episcopal-Zion Episcopal Church, Dobbs Ferry Historical Society, Dobbs Ferry, NY.

<sup>61</sup>"Zion: 'Mother of Churches.'"

<sup>62</sup>Neil Larson, "Christ Church Tarrytown National Register Nomination," 1987.

<sup>63</sup>Sanzo, "A History of the Zion Episcopal Church," 3; "Zion: 'Mother of Churches.'"

<sup>64</sup>Bolton, *History of the Protestant Episcopal Church*, 648; "Zion: 'Mother of Churches.'"

<sup>65</sup>"Zion: 'Mother of Churches.'"

<sup>66</sup>Shaver, "Church of St. Barnabas National Register Nomination."

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capturing Confederate vessels during the Civil War.<sup>67</sup> However, Zion parishioners donated land and money for the new church.<sup>68</sup> Zion and Grace continued to develop in tandem throughout the late-nineteenth century and fundraising efforts for the parish halls for Zion and Grace occurred jointly. Grace Church became independent by 1920.<sup>69</sup>

### Zion in the Twentieth & Twenty-First Centuries

In the 1970 parish directory, Zion proudly stated in reference to the 1854 expansion that “the large greystone Gothic building... is for all intents and purposes the building still in existence today.”<sup>70</sup> Although the 1870s addition significantly altered the plan of the church, the church and complex today retain their late-nineteenth century architectural character. The complex has undergone only a few changes since the end of the nineteenth century. Early in the twentieth century, stained-glass windows in the nave and electric light fixtures were added to the church’s interior. In 1919, Zion vestryman and senior warden Col. Franklin Q. Brown, a prominent resident who also donated to the Dobbs Ferry public library and village hall, donated a bell to commemorate all those from Dobbs Ferry who served in the First World War.<sup>71</sup> The bell is inscribed with the names of the Zion parishioners who fought in the war. Around this time, the congregation also decided to cover the rectory in stucco, then a fashionable way to redesign older houses.<sup>72</sup> In the early-1900s, applying a stucco coating was considered a way to beautify and modernize older buildings while also protecting them from the elements.<sup>73</sup> Additionally, prior to 1931, a rear wing was added to the parish hall and the horse barn on the complex was demolished.<sup>74</sup>

In the church, mid-twentieth century additions commemorated important people in Zion’s history. The church installed plaques in the nave in the 1950s to honor past parishioners and vestrymen, including James and Alexander Hamilton Jr. and Washington Irving.<sup>75</sup> In 1963, parishioners donated a new narthex with Gothic doors for the church in memory of Colonel and Mrs. Franklin Q. Brown.<sup>76</sup> That addition replaced a projecting wooden entrance with a steeply-pitched, trussed roof.<sup>77</sup> After 1964, two additional stained-glass windows with biblical imagery were installed in the chancel. Created by R. Geissler, Inc., a New York-based church furniture and fixtures firm, these windows commemorated priest and scholar George William Edwards and Zion parishioners Col. Roger Brown Clark and Kathleen Brown Clark.<sup>78</sup> All of the changes at Zion in the twentieth century occurred in ways that respected the character and integrity of the church buildings and complex.

<sup>67</sup>Description of Zion Episcopal Church, post-1933.

<sup>68</sup>“Zion: ‘Mother of Churches.’”

<sup>69</sup>Sanzo, “A History of the Zion Episcopal Church,” 8; Zion Episcopal Church Financial Records, 1880s (Collection of Zion Episcopal Church).

<sup>70</sup>Zion Episcopal Church Parish Directory, 1970-71, Folder: Pamphlets- Religion, Dobbs Ferry Historical Society, Dobbs Ferry, NY.

<sup>71</sup>Sanzo, “A History of the Zion Episcopal Church,” 8.

<sup>72</sup>“Historical Background, Zion Episcopal Church,” n.d., Folder: Religion-Episcopal-Zion Episcopal Church, Dobbs Ferry Historical Society, Dobbs Ferry, NY.

<sup>73</sup>“New Homes from Old Houses,” *National Steel Fabric Co.*, c. 1920s. 1.

<sup>74</sup>G.W. Bromley & Co., “*Atlas of Westchester County, New York*,” 1914, Volume 2, Plate 74; G.W. Bromley & Co., *Atlas of Westchester County, New York*, 1931, Volume 3, Plate 30.

<sup>75</sup>Zion Episcopal Church, “Zion Episcopal Church: Buildings and Memorials, 1833-2014,” c. 2014 (unpublished self-guided tour of the church interior).

<sup>76</sup>“Zion Episcopal Church, Dobbs Ferry,” n.d., Folder: Religion-Episcopal-Zion Episcopal Church, Dobbs Ferry Historical Society, Dobbs Ferry, NY.

<sup>77</sup>Postcards of Zion Episcopal Church, n.d., Dobbs Ferry Historical Society, Dobbs Ferry, NY.

<sup>78</sup>Zion Episcopal Church, “Zion Episcopal Church: Buildings and Memorials, 1833-2014.”

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The character of the church community has also retained its integrity and its traditions over time. Zion Episcopal Church has remained an important community organization throughout its history. It has been the site of community celebrations, gatherings, and meetings. Beyond supporting other local Episcopal churches, Zion has engaged with other religious groups in Dobbs Ferry. Zion has maintained strong relationships with the local Jewish community for decades, offering the parish hall for some of this group's religious services.<sup>79</sup> The church also continues its longstanding tradition of tolling the bell in the tower thirty-one times every Memorial Day to commemorate the thirty-one people from Dobbs Ferry who died at war. Due to its architectural and cultural significance in Dobbs Ferry and beyond, Zion was listed as a Historical Landmark of Westchester County in 1977.<sup>80</sup>

Zion has followed in its historical footsteps in serving as a progressive congregation. It was one of the first Episcopal churches legally to ordain a woman into priesthood in the United States. Although eleven women were ordained to priesthood in the Church of the Advocate of Philadelphia in 1974, the Episcopal Church did not vote to allow female priests until 1976.<sup>81</sup> In 1977, Zion ordained Barbara Schlachter as a priest. She became the second female priest in the Episcopal Diocese of New York.<sup>82</sup> Five years later Sheila McKivergnan Biggs was ordained at Zion.<sup>83</sup> Today, Zion Episcopal Church continues to welcome people of all genders and sexualities into the clergy and the congregation and continues to be a vibrant presence in Dobbs Ferry.

### Architectural Context

As first erected in the early 1830s, Zion Episcopal Church represented the first concerted phase of American Gothic Revival ecclesiastical design, an architectural movement spearheaded by the Episcopal Church. That period, predating the mid-century influence of the Ecclesiological movement, was marked by what architectural historian William H. Pierson referred to as the development of a more "authentic" Gothic, in order to distinguish it from the Gothic of earlier periods, in which Gothic detailing was typically applied to buildings that were otherwise of classical disposition. Major churches erected in that more "authentic" Gothic manner included architect Ithiel Town's Trinity Church in New Haven, Connecticut, 1814-17; and St. Paul's Church in Troy, New York, 1826-28 and St. James Church in Arlington, Vermont, 1829-31, which were similarly conceived. While all these examples, along with others, remained bound to the symmetrical center-tower form of the Wren-Gibbs meetinghouse, they were nevertheless more convincing in their Gothic features, and all were built of stone masonry construction, thereby distinguishing them from the wood-framed meetinghouses of that era. As noted by Pierson, those churches "achieved at least the visual semblance of Gothic," and they communicated what he defined as "something

<sup>79</sup>"Zion: 'Mother of Churches.'"

<sup>80</sup>Letter from Ralph L. Corden (Senior Warden) to Mrs. Barton, 1977, Folder: Religion-Episcopal-Zion Episcopal Church, Dobbs Ferry Historical Society, Dobbs Ferry, NY.

<sup>81</sup>Mary S. Donovan, *Women Priests in the Episcopal Church: The Experience of the First Decade*, (Cincinnati: Forward Movement Publications, 1988): 3 & 8.

<sup>82</sup>Photo of Barbara Schlachter with caption, 1977, Folder: Religion-Episcopal-Zion Episcopal Church, Dobbs Ferry Historical Society, Dobbs Ferry, NY.

<sup>83</sup>"The Ordination of A Priest: Sheila McKivergnan Biggs," May 1, 1982, Folder: Pamphlets- Religion, Dobbs Ferry Historical Society, Dobbs Ferry, NY.

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of the developing feel for Gothic which was touched off by a new awareness within the Episcopal church itself of the role of architecture in the Anglican tradition.”<sup>84</sup>

By the 1840s, the Ecclesiological phase of the Gothic Revival had been initiated in the United States; the New York Ecclesiological Society, which was responsible for the proliferation of Ecclesiological architectural doctrine in the Episcopal Church in New York during the third quarter of the nineteenth century, was established in 1848. During that decade more authoritative Gothic churches were erected, the designs of which were drawn from specific medieval English examples sanctioned by the Ecclesiologists. Among those was St. John’s the Less in Philadelphia, 1846-48, which was inspired by St. Michael’s Longstanton, England, erected in the thirteenth century; it helped establish the small bell-cote type English parish church as a suitable model for American religious needs. It was also during that decade that Richard Upjohn, a leading figure of contemporary American Episcopal church architecture, helped signal the beginning of the so-called ecclesiastical phase of this movement, pushing beyond the earlier Gothic efforts of architects Ithiel Town, Josiah Brady, and others. While Upjohn’s Trinity Church in Manhattan, New York, 1839-46, was a landmark American essay in the Gothic style, it nevertheless was not warmly embraced by the Ecclesiologists, who took note of what they deemed its various deficiencies, among them the building’s distinctive Perpendicular Gothic detailing and the failure to fully express the chancel on the exterior. Demands on Upjohn for new church designs from congregations across the county led to the publication in 1852 of his book, *Upjohn’s Rural Architecture*, which provided designs and specifications for economical churches meant for rural Episcopal parishes with limited budgets and without direct guidance from a professional architect.

As modified in the mid-1850s and 1870, Zion Episcopal Church offered itself as an acknowledgment of the increasing influence of the Ecclesiological movement in America, and this work was completed only a few years after the establishment of the New York Ecclesiological Society. In addition to the expansion of seating capacity for the growing church, the work undertaken in that era addressed perceived deficiencies in the physical relationship between the nave and chancel, and it gave the overall building a more authoritative Gothic feel, as manifested in its new transepts and higher belltower, thus countering the extended building’s low, horizontal massing with a more vertical Gothic effect.

The complex’s architectural significance is enhanced by the Late Gothic Revival parish hall, erected towards the end of the 1880s, as well as the rectory, a later eighteenth century vernacular dwelling that was remade, following its acquisition by the church, into a more stylish house of Second Empire conception with that style’s ubiquitous feature, a French mansard roof. The redesign of an existing house in a more fashionable domestic idiom was common practice in the mid-nineteenth century period, and was promoted in period pattern books such as George E. Woodward’s *Architecture and Rural Art* (1861) and *Country Homes* (1870), and Henry H. Holly’s *Country Seats* (1864), among others.

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<sup>84</sup>William H. Pierson in *American Buildings and Their Architects: Technology and the Picturesque* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1980), 148.

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Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary is indicated by a heavy line on the attached map with scale.

Boundary Justification

The boundary was drawn according to the tax lot to include the entire site owned and occupied by Zion Episcopal Church.

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Zion Episcopal Church  
Village of Dobbs Ferry, Westchester County, New York 55 Cedar Street  
Dobbs Ferry, NY 10522



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

Nomination Boundary



Parks, Recreation  
and Historic Preservation

United States Department of the Interior  
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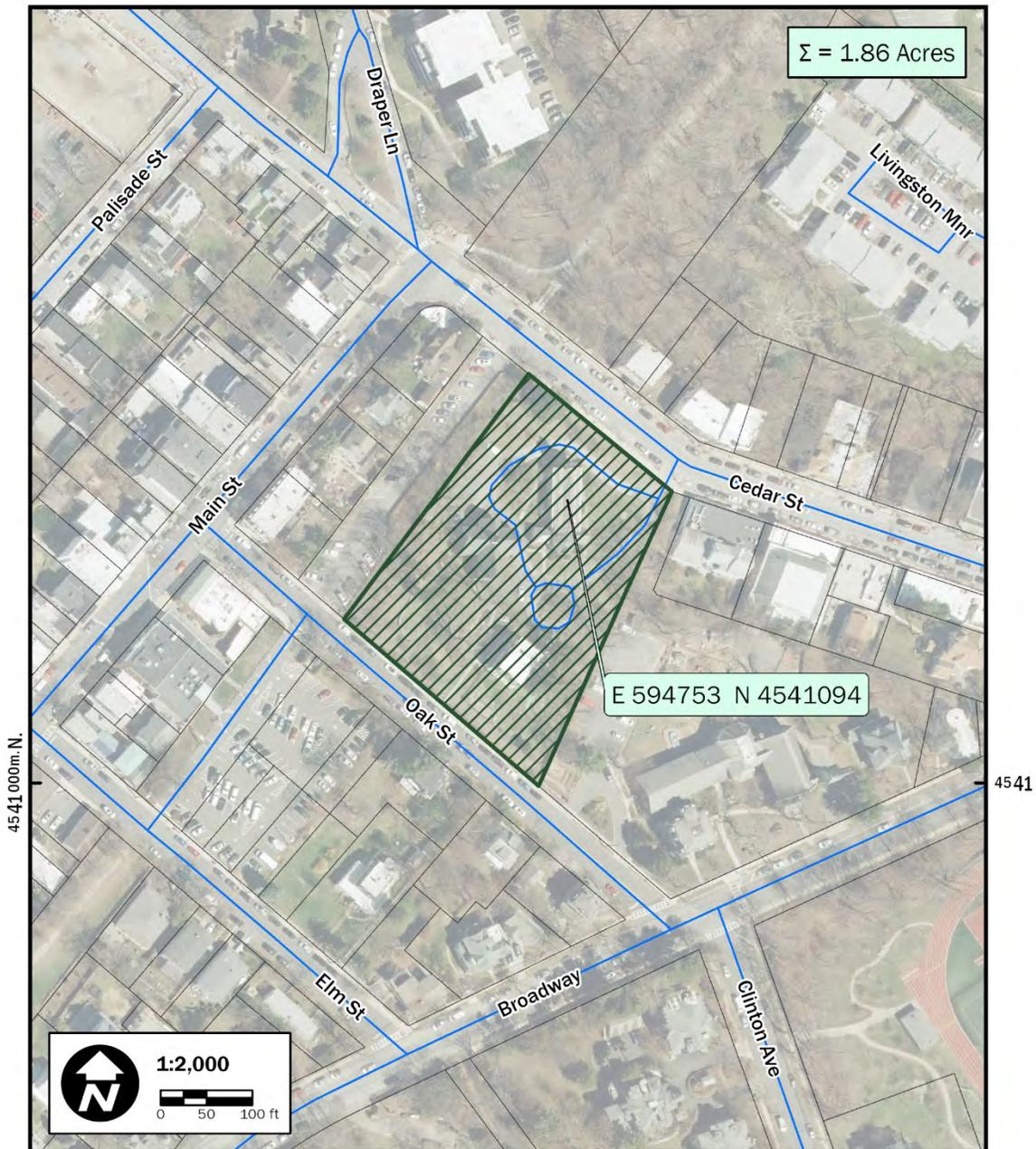
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Zion Episcopal Church  
Village of Dobbs Ferry, Westchester County, New York

55 Cedar Street  
Dobbs Ferry, NY 10522



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

Nomination Boundary



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**Zion Episcopal Church**

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Photo List

Name of Property: Zion Episcopal Church

City or Vicinity: Dobbs Ferry

County & State: Westchester County, NY

Photographers: Emily R. Kahn

Date Photographed: February 2, 2020

NY\_Westchester Co\_Zion Episcopal Church\_001

Church campus, road, parish hall, & west wing and part of chancel of main church, looking northwest

NY\_Westchester Co\_Zion Episcopal Church\_002

Church campus, southeast elevation of rectory, parish hall, & west wing of main church, looking northwest

NY\_Westchester Co\_Zion Episcopal Church\_003

Church campus, exterior, west wing of main church, rectory, & front wing of parish hall, looking south

NY\_Westchester Co\_Zion Episcopal Church\_004

Main church, exterior, façade, looking south

NY\_Westchester Co\_Zion Episcopal Church\_005

Main church, exterior, east elevation & east wing, looking west

NY\_Westchester Co\_Zion Episcopal Church\_006

Main church, exterior, west elevation & west wing, looking east

NY\_Westchester Co\_Zion Episcopal Church\_007

Main church, exterior, rear, looking north

NY\_Westchester Co\_Zion Episcopal Church\_008

Main church, interior, nave and chancel, looking south from narthex

NY\_Westchester Co\_Zion Episcopal Church\_009

Main church, interior, nave, looking north from chancel

NY\_Westchester Co\_Zion Episcopal Church\_010

Main church, interior, Doremus window (center) & R. Geissler windows (sides), looking south

NY\_Westchester Co\_Zion Episcopal Church\_011

Main church, interior, sacristy, looking west

NY\_Westchester Co\_Zion Episcopal Church\_012

Rectory, exterior, façade & northwest elevation, looking south

NY\_Westchester Co\_Zion Episcopal Church\_013

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Rectory, exterior, rear elevation, looking northeast

NY\_Westchester Co\_Zion Episcopal Church\_014

Rectory, exterior, southeast elevation, looking northwest

NY\_Westchester Co\_Zion Episcopal Church\_015

Rectory, interior, black marble mantel, looking northwest

NY\_Westchester Co\_Zion Episcopal Church\_016

Rectory, interior, wooden mantel, looking southwest

NY\_Westchester Co\_Zion Episcopal Church\_017

Parish hall, exterior, façade, looking west

NY\_Westchester Co\_Zion Episcopal Church\_018

Parish hall, exterior, rear & south wings, looking southeast

NY\_Westchester Co\_Zion Episcopal Church\_019

Parish hall, exterior, north wing with sides of rear and front wings, looking south

NY\_Westchester Co\_Zion Episcopal Church\_020

Parish hall, interior, hall, looking north

NY\_Westchester Co\_Zion Episcopal Church\_021

Parish hall, interior, hall, looking south

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NY\_Westchester Co\_Zion Episcopal Church\_022  
Labeled map of the Zion Episcopal Church Complex  
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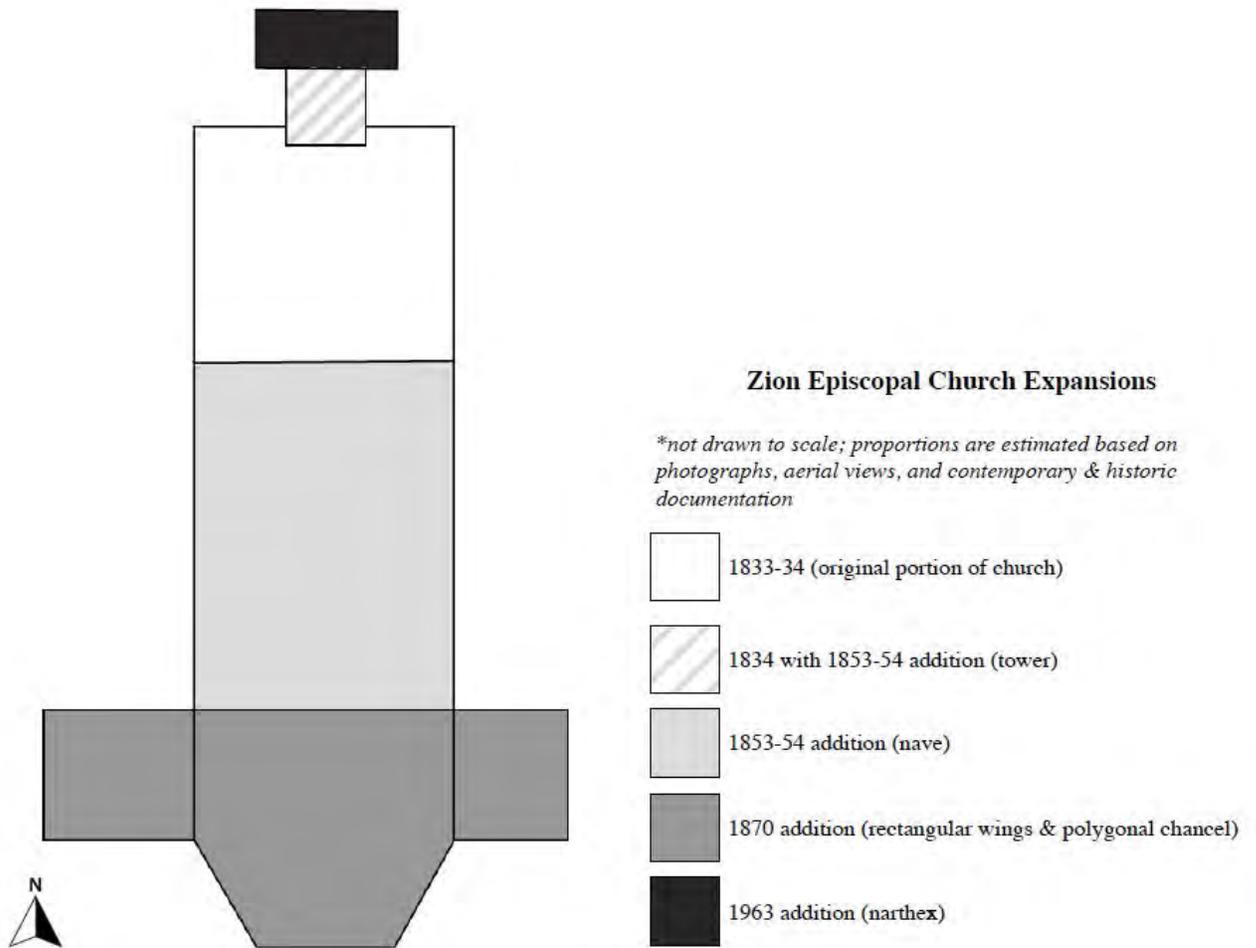
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Zion Episcopal Church

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NY\_Westchester Co\_Zion Episcopal Church\_023  
Diagram illustrating the various expansions to the Zion Episcopal Church  
Created by: Emily Kahn

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Zion Episcopal Church

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NY\_Westchester Co\_Zion Episcopal Church\_024

“Old White Church,” also known as Little White Church when constructed in 1823

Source: <http://www.southpres.org/about/>

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Zion Episcopal Church

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Zion Church, prior to enlargement.

NY\_Westchester Co\_Zion Episcopal Church\_025

1855 drawing of original portion of main church, looking northeast

Source: Robert Bolton, History of the Protestant Episcopal Church, in the County of Westchester: From its Foundation, A.D. 1693 to A.D. 1855, page 651.



Zion Church, Lower Greenburgh.

NY\_Westchester Co\_Zion Episcopal Church\_026

1855 drawing of main church after 1853-54 addition, looking northwest

Source: Robert Bolton, 1855, History of the Protestant Episcopal Church, in the County of Westchester: From its Foundation, A.D. 1693 to A.D. 1855, page 650.

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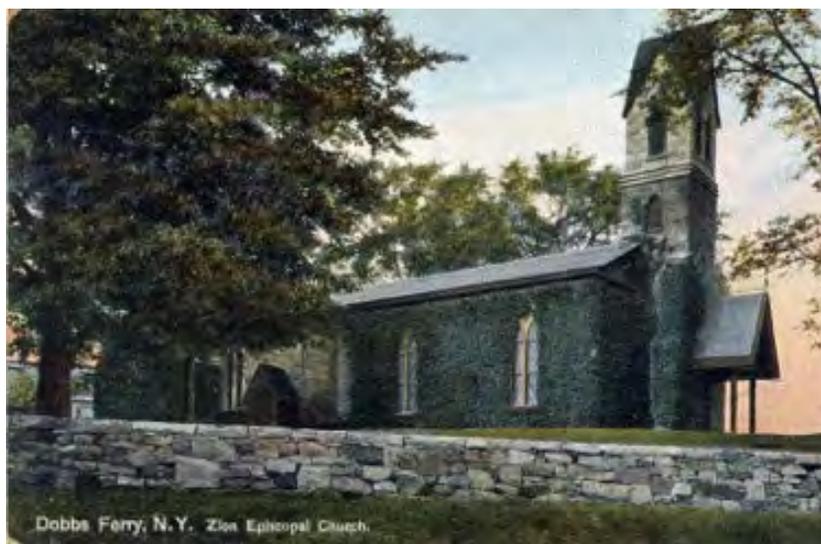
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NY\_Westchester Co\_Zion Episcopal Church\_027  
Postcard of main church and parish hall c. 1901, looking northwest  
Source: Dobbs Ferry Historical Society



NY\_Westchester Co\_Zion Episcopal Church\_028  
Postcard of main church with wooden entrance c. 1915, looking southwest  
Source: Dobbs Ferry Historical Society

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NY\_Westchester Co\_Zion Episcopal Church\_029  
Early-1900s photo of interior of main church, looking south  
Source: Westchester County Historical Society, M-585.











 ZION EPISCOPAL CHURCH  
FOUNDED 1833 SUNDAY 11 AM

Hilltop  
Third Street  
Tuesday  
& Saturday  
12-4pm  
☞☞☞  
Worship  
the Lord  
Psalm 122









