

VLR-2/21/78 NRHP-3/26/80

Form No. 10-300 (Rev. 10-74)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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DATE ENTERED

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORMSEE INSTRUCTIONS IN **HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS**  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

## 1 NAME

HISTORIC

New Providence Presbyterian church

AND/OR COMMON

## 2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER On west side of State Route 252, north of Brownsburg; at southwest corner of intersection of state routes 252 and 726  
NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN Brownsburg CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

STATE Virginia CODE 51 COUNTY Rockbridge CODE 163

## 3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
DISTRICT	PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE <input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input type="checkbox"/> PARK
STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
SITE	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC ACQUISITION	<input type="checkbox"/> ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER

## 4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME New Providence Presbyterian church

c/o Rev. Thomas T. Biggs, Pastor

STREET &amp; NUMBER

RFD 1

CITY, TOWN

STATE

Raphine

VICINITY OF

Virginia 24472

## 5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE.

REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Rockbridge County Courthouse

STREET &amp; NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

STATE

Lexington

Virginia

## 6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS (2) (See continuation sheet #1)

TITLE

(1) Historic American Buildings Survey Inventory

DATE

1957

 FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCALDEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

Library of Congress

CITY, TOWN

Washington, D. C.

STATE

## 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input type="checkbox"/> ALTERED
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED	

### DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Set near a quiet country road in rural Rockbridge County, the Greek Revival New Providence Presbyterian Church is a monumental, one-story brick building completed in 1859. The facade is composed of a central recessed portico marked by slightly projecting flanking piers and a similarly projecting pediment supported on two massive, unfluted Doric columns. This assertive treatment of a negative space is accented by the flight of steps leading up to the portico and by the use of unpierced walls marked only by plain Doric pilasters to either side of the central pavilion. The building is four bays long and has pilasters separating the bays, as well as aedicule window frames. Similar frames embellish the two entrances from the portico. The low hipped roof is encircled by a broad, white-painted entablature broken into two parts by a tenia band, and with stylized, corbelled brick modillions in the frieze. This treatment is omitted in the pavilion entablature, where the monumentality of that feature is emphasized by the undivided and unembellished frieze.

The brick on the south and east sides of the church--respectively, the side facing Brownsburg and the cemetery, and the main facade--is laid in Flemish bond, while the recessed portions of the portico and the north side are laid in five-course American bond with Flemish variant; the whole body of the church has penciled joints.

The plan of New Providence Presbyterian Church is a plain one. The whole of the interior is occupied by a single large auditorium with a gallery at the east end and for most of the length of the two long sides. (The latter galleries ran the length of the church until early in this century.) The galleries are entered from flights of stairs located at either end of the recessed portico.

The interior arrangement and decoration has been little altered since the building's erection. The central pulpit at the west end consists of three sections, the central one recessed, each with a central raised panel. The whole is set on a similarly shaped platform and is set off visually by a tabernacle on the rear wall. The latter is composed of two pairs of paneled Doric pilasters with delicate pierced plaster foliage in the echinus of each capital. These pilasters support a full entablature with similar plasterwork at the base of the cornice. The whole is surmounted by a stepped blocking course with plaster foliage in the central panel. This design, like the plan of the church itself, is based on Asher Benjamin's The Builders's Guide (1839), but as in most rural buildings inspired by such sources the adaptation is very free and serves only as a starting point for the design. The gallery is decorated with recessed panels on its face and is supported on fluted Greek Doric columns. The pews may date from 1913 when the present ceiling and choir stall were added.

In 1926 a three-story brick Sunday School wing was added to the rear. Though large, it is not obtrusive.

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### BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The register bounds have been drawn to include the church with its attached Sunday

(See Continuation Sheet #1)

## 8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW				
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)	
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION			

SPECIFIC DATES 1859

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

### STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Completed in 1859, New Providence Presbyterian Church in Rockbridge County is its congregation's fifth building and the third on the site. The distinguished Greek Revival structure is similar in design to the churches built for the Tinkling Springs congregation in Augusta County and for Hampden-Sydney College in Prince Edward County. The architect of these two buildings, the pastor Robert L. Dabney, may have had a hand in the design of New Providence. Its austerely elegant interior decoration is in the Benjaminesque manner and has been little altered since the building's construction.

New Providence Presbyterian Church was organized in 1746 by the New Side Presbyterian minister John Blair and played an important role in the establishment of the Synod of Virginia later in the 18th century. The Rev. John Brown, first minister of the church, kept a school at nearby Fairfield which became Liberty Hall Academy and later Washington and Lee University (now located at Lexington). In 1819 the Female Benevolent Society of New Providence Church was organized. The earliest known Virginia missionary society, it was a product of the impulse toward religious benevolence engendered by the Second Great Awakening, an impulse which broadened into the great reform movements of the second quarter of the 19th century.

New Providence's first building was a log structure near Spottswood. Another log church was built on Moffatts Creek sometime before 1754, and a few years later a third, stone, church was built. This was succeeded in 1812 by a brick church built on the same site; the latter was in turn replaced by the present building in 1859. Although the designer of the church is not named in the records the exterior is very similar to the Tinkling Springs Presbyterian Church erected in 1850 after designs by that congregation's pastor Robert L. Dabney. Dabney also designed the Hampden-Sydney Chapel (1865) in the same form. If Dabney was not knowingly responsible for the New Providence building it must certainly have been copied from his work at Tinkling Springs. The plan of the church, like many Virginia churches of the second and third quarters of the 19th century, was freely adapted from Plates LVIII and LIX, "Churches," in Asher Benjamin's The Builder's Guide (1839). The vestibule and the enclosure of the gallery stairs are omitted in the three Dabney designs. Dabney employed the full entablature and the pilasters dividing the bays that Benjamin showed as well as his recessed portico supported on a pair of anta columns. However, he reduced the order to the plainest Doric and for the pedimented gable roof substituted a low hipped roof with a pediment over the portico only. Benjamin's tower was omitted.

In many ways the design of the New Providence building is the best of the three. The proportions of its columns are more satisfactory, and the interior is definitely superior to its cousins which also have tabernacles at the pulpit end. Those are oversized efforts of attenuated proportions and lack the density of impact and the delicacy of detail which characterize the Rockbridge County church. Like the exterior the interior was inspired by, but not copied from, Benjamin's suggestions.

(See Continuation Sheet #1)

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

New Providence Presbyterian Church, Rockbridge County, Virginia

**CONTINUATION SHEET #1**

ITEM NUMBER 6,7,8 PAGE #1

**6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

(2) Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission Survey  
1968, 1977 State  
Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission  
Richmond, Virginia

**8. SIGNIFICANCE**

New Providence Presbyterian Church is still an active organization, and the structure is carefully maintained.

**7. DESCRIPTION**

School wing, the immediate church yard, and the church cemetery. The boundaries coincide with the cemetery bounds indicated on the Brownsburg, Virginia, U.S.G.S. 7½' quadrangle (1967).

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## 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Benjamin, Asher. The Builder's Guide. Boston, 1839.

Patteson, R. K., Jr. "The First One Hundred Years of New Providence Church", Proceedings of the Rockbridge Historical Society, in press.

Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission archives.

## 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY Approximately 2 acres

UTM REFERENCES

A 118 6149111d 1420159d  
ZONE EASTING NORTHING  
C                     

B                       
ZONE EASTING NORTHING  
D                     

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION Beginning at a point at intersection of State routes 726 and 252, .9 mi. NW of Wades Mill, 200' W of Moffatts Creek; thence extending 300' S; thence extending 350' W; thence extending about 225' N to S side of State Route 726; thence following said side of said route 400' WNW to point of origin.

## LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

## 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission Staff

ORGANIZATION

Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission

DATE

January 1978

STREET & NUMBER

221 Governor Street

TELEPHONE

(804) 786-3144

CITY OR TOWN

Richmond,

STATE

Virginia 23219

## 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL       

STATE X

LOCAL       

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

  
TITLE Tucker Hill, Executive Director  
Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission

DATE FEB 21 1978

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION  
ATTEST:

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

USGS 7.5' quadrangle  
Brownsburg, VA

(Scale 1:24000)  
1967

NEW PROVIDENCE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH  
Rockbridge County, VA

UTM References:  
17/649110/4201590

