

Spanning the Gap

ART AND ARCHITECTURE

Walpack Center Church

by Architecture Intern Drew Eisinger

It was winter, this past winter to be exact, when the snow shrouded landscape of Walpack Valley provided particular solitude and escape from the hustle and complications of life in the city.

It was my first journey into the New Jersey countryside and as I traveled south along Route 615, below Peters Valley, the distant village of Walpack Center came into view. Standing high above the picturesque buildings which comprise this single lane village, rose the Methodist-Episcopal Church. It is no longer operational, but instead is the focal point for activities of the Walpack Historical Society. I tried to imagine its appearance when originally constructed.

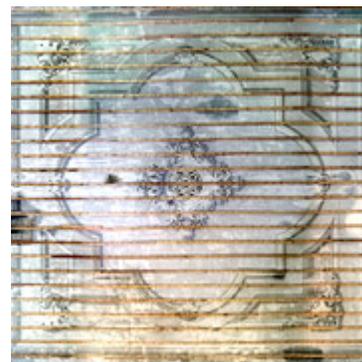
In 1872, the year the church was dedicated, the tower would have been capped with a spire rising 65 feet above the base. As I walked up to the entrance I had to agree with the church's founding fathers: this was the perfect setting for the construction of the new church. The village and surrounding valley would have seemed incomplete without its presence.

The wood-frame church is itself the very model of vernacular Victorian architecture. The front gable, broken by the tower, is decorated with flush siding over which are applied a series of moldings. A tall arched window over the double entrance doors is detailed with woven gothic arches at the head and



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Removal of tiles revealed the original painted ceiling in 2005.

(Below photos all NPS Photos by Ken Sandri)



Walpack Center Methodist Episcopal Church.

louvered shutters to the sides. Along the sides of the building, low arched windows flood the interior with light.

The interior walls and ceilings, now covered with acoustical tile, were originally decorated with fresco or painted plaster. Paint was applied while plaster was still moist. Artists chose to illustrate architectural moldings rather than biblical scenes. I was startled by the artistry. Shade and shadow applied with a brush!

The new church replaced an earlier structure located near the local cemetery. It was built by J.H. Williamson upon land donated by Jacob S. Roe at a cost of approximately \$7,000. The church was home to regular services until 1978, when the building was sold to the federal government. Today Walpack Center is listed as a Historic District on the National Register of Historic Places. Some structures have been adapted to office, housing, and museum use. Others, including the church, await further restoration.



Front door of Walpack Church.



Interior doors.