
The Cumberland Churchscape

*the early religious architecture
of Cumberland County, New Jersey*

Frank L. Greenagel

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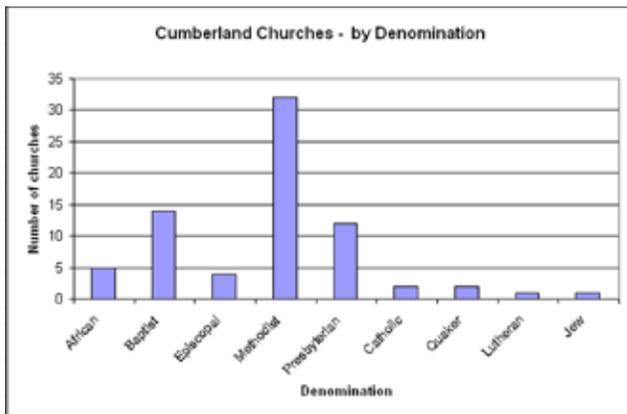
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Overview

There are 80 surviving churches, meetinghouses and synagogues in Cumberland County that were erected before 1900,[1] a third of which were erected by Methodists. Two are Quaker, four Episcopal, five African Methodist, 12 Presbyterian, 14 Baptist and 32 Methodist (including four Methodist Protestant congregations). About 60 percent were erected in the decades following the Civil War. The profile is very different from that of Salem county, which requires some explanation.



The graph shows the distribution of churches by denomination in the county. Methodists account for more than twice as many as the second-place Baptists and almost three times as many as the Presbyterian churches.

Cumberland was a part of Salem until 1748, and although Quakers made up the dominant portion of the initial purchasers, the eastern section of Salem that is now Cumberland County was never a “Quaker Colony” in the sense that Burlington or even Salem were. The initial religious complexion of the area included New England Congregationalists who settled here in 1680 and Baptists who came from New England in 1683. An extended examination of the state’s religious makeup was published in 1975 by Peter Wacker; he noted that whereas Quakers and “reputed Quakers” constituted

about half of Burlington’s population in 1745, Salem’s (including Cumberland) was only a little over 16 percent.[2] When the two counties were divided several years later, Cumberland’s percent would have fallen well below that.

Quaker influence was centered on Greenwich, and never really got a strong foothold elsewhere in the county, although there were Quaker societies in Fairfield, Mauricetown, Millville and Port Elizabeth. Whatever political or cultural hegemony the Society of Friends enjoyed during the early decades after initial settlement was ultimately overwhelmed by the mainstream Presbyterians, and, especially in the nineteenth century by the itinerants, revivals and circuit system of the Methodists and Baptists. A one-sentence summary of the churchscape of the county is that it contains a dozen medium-sized, well-designed traditional churches, generally located in the larger towns, and three dozen or so small, wooden-frame buildings, mostly Methodist or Baptist, located in or near villages and hamlets. More than half the remaining houses of worship in the county are simple wooden-frame buildings, most of no particular architectural merit, although several are of considerable historical interest. Regardless of architectural style, churches are of special note.

In the dispersed farming society of early America, churches in both town and country were vital centers of community life, as government proclamations were broadcast from the pulpit and news of prices and politics were exchanged in the churchyard.[3]

In terms of architectural significance, the orthodox Quaker meetinghouse in Greenwich, the Baptist church at Cohansey, and two or three of the early Presbyterian churches are of particular interest. All are not only among the oldest and best-preserved, but architecturally they represent the Georgian style that is the

1 That total includes two that have since burned or been razed since this work began, and two others that were erected in 1902-1903 that surely belong to the nineteenth century.

2 Peter O. Wacker. *Land and People* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1975), 183.

3 Patricia U. Bonomi. *Under the Cope of Heaven: Religion, Society, and Politics in Colonial America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 88.

defining characteristic of South Jersey's early religious architecture.

There are several fine Methodist churches in the county; most are modest and unprepossessing. A couple of the later ones appear to have been built from plans issued by the Methodist Board of Church Extension, a body charged with improving the architectural style of the denomination's buildings, or by architect Benjamin Price, who worked closely with that Board. In any case, all but the Commerce Street meeting-house in Bridgeton were erected long after Asbury's death and his dicta to build small and simply had been forgotten. By the 1850s Methodists were the largest denomination in the state, and leaders had been urging congregations to build in a manner commensurate with that fact.[4]

There are four small vernacular buildings and one grand one erected by black congregations, an equal number of Episcopal churches and chapels, a Jewish synagogue erected by a late-nineteenth century agricultural community, two Catholic churches and one Lutheran church built by German immigrants recruited by an early glassworks. That is a quantitative summary of the county's churchscape. There are no Reformed churches in the county, no Congregational churches, nor any of the pietist sects that are scattered across what was West Jersey in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Peter Wacker notes there were Moravian missions, presumably to Swedes located in Bridgeton and on the Maurice River between 1743 and 1749, but no trace of them has remained.[5]

With a bit of imagination, one may find modest examples of the main currents in American architecture in the county, but few that merit more than a footnote in any textbook on eighteenth- and nineteenth-century religious architecture. This is in contrast to the several excellent brick residences in the county whose initials, dates and patterns in glazed brick are remarked on as a distinctively American regional style.

SETTLEMENT

Salem's settlement predates that of Burlington, Camden and Philadelphia by a few years, and for a while, it seems to have had equal weight in the

4 Stephen J. Fleming. "South Jersey Methodism and the Creation of Ocean Grove." *New Jersey History*, Volume 122, Numbers 1-2 (Spring-Summer 2004), 51.

5 Wacker, 171.

Quaker and commercial communities of South Jersey. Probably because of the tidal wetland terrain, which necessitated arduous systems of transportation, Salem and Cumberland did not develop the more densely-settled towns and cities of Camden County. With the exception of Greenwich and probably Mauricetown, it appears that most towns in the county developed *after* lumbering, a grist mill, tavern or a forge were established. The technical term for that kind of settlement is *agglomerated towns*, although it usually is applied to the growth of larger cities and the surrounding suburbs. Most were not planned like the New England settlements, with a cluster of residences around a central commons. With a few exceptions like Port Norris, most were regional service centers for agricultural activity, including lumbering.

The county grew up along its creeks and rivers, which were often the principal and only dependable highways. The earliest permanent settlements in Cumberland County were along the Cohansey River. Between 1680 and 1700 four colonies of settlers from New England and Long Island had begun to carve out of the South Jersey wilderness a home for themselves and their families. By 1700, Greenwich and Bowentown on the north side of the river and Back Neck and Fairfield on the south side of the river were the earliest settlements in the county.[6] Smaller rivers like the Maurice also provided access to other settlements within the county from the earliest days, and most of the early settlements—Greenwich, Bridgeton, Fairfield, Mauricetown, Newport, Dividing Creek, and Port Elizabeth, for example—are found along the banks of those rivers. Speculation in land only occasionally fostered the building of villages. A significant portion of the people who had settled were scattered rather than clustered into hamlets and villages, which was the common pattern in New England. "Most Americans lived in cultural enclaves," according to historian Daniel Howe,[7] but the reason for Cumberland's pattern of densities was largely accessibility, especially to waterways to the sea.

Dispersed settlement was the rule in most of New Jersey during the eighteenth century. Settlers thought of themselves as living in certain

6 *Fairfield Township Environmental Resource Inventory*, with permission of Fairfield Township. Published by Fairfield Township Environmental Commission 1994.

7 Daniel Walker Howe. *What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815-1848*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007) 39.

“towns,” and their mail was so addressed, but the nature of these towns was far different from those of the present day.[8]

“Owners of farmland near a mill or along a frequently-traveled road and surrounded by prosperous farms sometimes determined to survey or plat a village site of two or three streets crossing at right angles and bordered by square or rectangular lots.”[9] But just as often, they decided to forego development and passed their intact holdings on to their children.

A few years after initial settlement a grist mill or sawmill might be the first commercial building erected, followed perhaps by a few more residences. It appears that early settlers were in no way dependent on towns and villages. In time, a tannery or blacksmith shop, and much later, perhaps a sash-and-blind manufacturer or wheelwright shop would open, then another tavern, if the hamlet was on a traveled road or a river used for commerce. By the end of the eighteenth century when the Methodists were expanding their initial circuits, if a visiting preacher was able to form a class, those 6-10 people would meet in homes once a week, with or without the presence of the preacher, and eventually, often years later, a modest wooden-frame meetinghouse might be erected—sometimes in the village, but often outside on an acre or two of donated farmland.

The early settlement of Cumberland was not appreciably different than large parts of the state—Monmouth, Morris, Hunterdon and Warren also consisted of widely scattered farms, with few villages until much later. They were agricultural, with a few areas, as in Cumberland, based on small manufacturing, mining, and exploitation of natural resources. Early governors, some of whom never actually saw Cumberland, called it “pine and barren—sand lands,” or “sandy barren deserts” even as late as the 1750s[10]. Samuel Smith’s *History of New Jersey*, published in 1765 observed that it was “poor to barren land, in respect to tillage; but in part abounding with pines and cedars, and some few tracts of swamps.” Salem, he said, was, “in general, rich,” while Cumberland was “mostly poor.”[11]

Puritan emigrants from the New Haven Colony of Fairfield (Connecticut) first settled along the banks of the Cohansey River as early as 1660. Exactly when these Puritans organized a church is not known, but a pastor was among them by 1695.[12] Rev. Thomas Bridge, an Englishman and Oxford graduate described as having been “a man of wealth, piety, learning, ability and manifold experience,” was requested in 1692 to consider removing from Bermuda to the Cohansey region, because “Many Persons in diverse Parts of ye Country have frequently exprest their desires of a Minister & assure us they will Contribute towards his Comfortable subsistence & pay him all that duty respect & deference his worke deserves.”[13] It is known that Bridge accepted the call and was in Fairfield in 1695. Under his direction, a log meeting house was built, to be replaced later by the frame predecessor of the Old Stone Church, which stands today near Fairton. In 1706, the congregation affiliated with the first American presbytery then being formed at Philadelphia, thus becoming, in fact, a Presbyterian church.

Across the Cohansey River from Fairfield, at Greenwich, a second Presbyterian congregation was begun around 1700, although its formal organization was delayed for a quarter of a century.[14] Those early settlements in the 1680s and 90s were largely established by people moving in from Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Great Britain—England, Wales, and Northern Ireland (Ulster). Some whole congregations, like the Cohansey Baptists and the Seventh Day Baptists who settled in Shiloh moved in, but the settlements, with a few exceptions, exhibit little of the religious dedication that is to be found in Burlington’s early years, if we are to accept the testimony of Elmer and Cushing’s correspondents; few described themselves as religious refugees, and there appears to have been an acceptance of a religious pluralism that was not common in the founding of Burlington or Newark.

The non-white population of Cumberland was a little over two percent in 1772; it increased to a maximum of 4.6% by 1810.[15] The mean for New Jersey was a little over 7.5%, with heavy concentra-

8 Peter O. Wacker. *The Musconetcong Valley of New Jersey*. (New Brunswick: N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1968) 127.

9 John Stilgoe, *Common Landscape of America*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982) 257.

10 Wacker, *Land and People*, 48.

11 Cited by Wacker, *Land and People*, 52.

12 Thomas Cushing and Charles E. Sheppard. *History of Gloucester, Salem and Cumberland Counties, New Jersey*. (Philadelphia: Everts & Peck, 1883).

13 Ibid.

14 R. Craig Koedel. *South Jersey Heritage: A Social, Economic and Cultural History* [online at http://westjersey.org/sjh/sjh_chap_1.htm]

15 Wacker, *Land and People*, 192.

tions of African-Americans in Bergen, Somerset and Monmouth counties.[16] Cumberland's was among the lowest in New Jersey, next to Burlington and Sussex; that indicates the absence of large-scale farming and manufacturing, which generally relied on slaves.

THE EARLIER SETTLEMENTS

The first English attempt of settlement in New Jersey was actually made in present day Salem County, predating their settlement in Elizabeth by 36 years.[17] In 1641, some 50 English families (probably emigrants from the New Haven, Connecticut Colony), settled on Salem Creek. That settlement was soon run off, burned out or scattered by Dutch troops dispatched from New Amsterdam.

About 1642, the Swedish West India Company bought the whole region, from Cape May to Raccoon Creek, from the Lenape Indians. In order to unite the remaining English with the Swedes, the Swedish governor who arrived from Sweden in 1642 was instructed to

act kindly and faithfully toward them; and as these English expected soon, by further arrivals, to increase their numbers to several hundreds, and seemed also willing to be subjects of the Swedish government, he was to receive them under allegiance, though not without endeavoring to effect their removal.[18]

In 1654, the Swedish yielded their possessions on the Delaware to the Dutch, who in turn submitted to the English crown soon after the capitulation of New Amsterdam.[19] Wacker writes that "Few Swedes lived in New Jersey until after the English had gained control of the area in 1665. . . . It is probable that almost all were originally squatters who finally gained legal title under the English Quaker Proprietors." [20] Those settlers were probably dispersed along the streams rather than in villages or neighborhoods, and they were eventually overwhelmed by the numbers of English settlers who

arrived in 1675 and thereafter as a result of Fenwick's colonization efforts, although Cushing notes that many of their descendents still owned land and held office in the 1880s.[21] Wacker notes that Swedes and Finns continued to emigrate to the region directly from Europe as late as 1663, and in-migration from Pennsylvania continued through about 1690.[22]

QUAKER PRESENCE

A few early immigrants were French Huguenots, others may have had some attachment to the Church of England, or to the Presbyterian or Baptist denominations, and both had sufficient numbers to organize congregations in Fairfield and Cohansey within a few years of initial settlement. Except for the Presbyterians and Baptists in Cumberland, however, between 1675 and 1722 there was no religion in the Salem Colony competing with the Society of Friends. Presbyterian services were held at an early date in Fairfield and Deerfield, and the very important Baptist presence in Cohansey was in place by 1683, but with those exceptions, the western portion of Salem up to the Cohansey River was certainly largely Quaker in influence.

We have no sense of how much pressure there was to belong and conform to Quaker norms, but among the Friends there was little doubt about the enforcement of Quaker mores regarding social and even commercial behavior. Certainly the low level of slavery testifies to their influence. Quaker membership seems to have dropped off significantly before the Revolution, and the dilution of their influence may also be traced, in part, to a substantial in-migration of non-Quakers in the early part of the eighteenth century; there was also a substantial emigration of Quakers to the west later in the century.[23] Quaker influence in Cumberland, Salem and even Gloucester, Camden and Burlington was far less pervasive in the general community by the end of the eighteenth century.[24]

When the Revolution came, it seems there were fewer loyalists in South Jersey than in several areas of the northern counties, although the desire for inde-

16 Ibid., 190.

17 John E. Pomfret. *The Province of West Jersey, 1609-1702* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1956), 24. Cushing, 11, 316.

18 Cushing, 7.

19 John W. Barber and Henry Howe. *Historical Collections of the State of New Jersey* (New York: S. Tuttle, 1844), at <http://history.rays-place.com/nj/salem-tship.htm>.

20 Wacker, 246.

21 Cushing, 316.

22 Wacker, 170.

23 Several Monthly Meetings record the out-migration of numerous Friends, especially to Ohio and the western lands. *Salem Quarter* (n.p.: Salem Quarterly Meeting, 1991).

24 David Hackett Fischer. *Albion's Seed; Four British Folkways in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989) 431.

pendence was cool among the Quakers. Members of the Presbyterian churches here assumed the lead in opposition to the crown—pretty much the same as in the north.

Growth was slow following independence. The 1840s that brought an influx of Irish and German immigrants into most northern counties was followed by a much greater immigration of largely Catholic Irish, German, and Italian peoples, and later, Eastern European Jews; that immigration was minimal in South Jersey. The impact of the foreign-born, with their “exotic” religions, is a major factor in the churchscape of the north but is largely absent in this region. Except in Bridgeton, Millville and perhaps Vineland, even today the towns are small and industrialization slight, which means that little of the substantial accumulation of wealth noted among the merchant and industrial class in Mercer and Morris can be found here. That will be reflected in the churchscape. Not only in the size and splendor of the churches, but in their stylishness, which was usually the product of big-city architects engaged by the social, political and cultural elite.

BLACK COMMUNITIES

The black presence in Cumberland was not nearly as strong as in Salem. There were early nineteenth-century black communities in Springtown/Othello, Gouldtown, Port Elizabeth and Backneck (Fairfield Township). Many of those communities died out as their residents were absorbed into the surrounding towns, and even now archeologists are working to unearth the history and extent of those communities from the foundations, shards and legends that remain.

There is reason to suppose there were slaves in the families of the early Swedish settlers in this county. And there is no doubt the Dutch imported and sold them wherever they could find Purchasers. After the English came, considerable numbers were imported from the West Indies, and disposed as merchandise to the agriculturists. “As early as 1696, the Friends in their yearly meetings brought the subject of trading in negroes before their society, and to their credit it is believed,

were the first religious sect that advised its members to desist from and discourage the future importation of them. From about that time the traffic in slaves became the subject of notice in their annual meetings, until about the year 1758, when they passed a resolution denying the right of membership to any of their people who should persist in detaining a fellow-creature in bondage after that time; but the resolution was not strictly complied with until many years afterward.”[25]

Springtown/Othello is one of several southern New Jersey settlements where free land-owning African-Americans prospered (modestly) throughout the nineteenth century. Other early settlements that included significant number of blacks included Timbucktoo, Swedesboro, Batsto, Port Norris, Port Elizabeth, and Millville. They were part of a larger movement called the “First Emancipation,” an early trend of freeing slaves bolstered locally by the strong Quaker presence in South Jersey. Free African-Americans often provided labor for white-owned farms, but established independence in their own communities as home and business owners, founding new churches and schools.[26] Since South Jersey contained routes of the Underground Railroad which aided fugitive slaves in their efforts to escape to the north, these communities also provided escapees from the southern states with opportunities to settle with other free blacks.[27]

Marshalltown [Salem County] is a prime example of this type of settlement, located in an isolated area that borders on the rich farmland in Mannington Township and the tidal wetlands of the Salem River. Its proximity to water transportation increases the likelihood that Marshalltown was active within the Underground Railroad. Today, few historic structures remain in the identified Marshalltown historic district, which has been determined eligible for the New Jersey and National Registers of Historic Places. Extant built resources include an abandoned 1885 residence, an active church, a vacant school building and two cemeteries. The majority of the district’s lots are potential archaeological sites of early

25 Barber.

26 Janet L. Sheridan, *Survey and Documentation of Marshalltown, New Jersey*, 2010.

27 *Ibid.* See also William J. Switala. *Underground Railroad in New York and New Jersey.*(Mechanicsburg, Pa.: Stackpole Books, 2006)

residences. These remaining buildings and sites together form a cohesive district representative of a rare and underappreciated African-American historic resource.[28]

As early as 1696, the Friends in their yearly meetings brought the subject of slavery before their society and they were the first religious sect that advised its members to desist from and discourage the use of slavery. From about that time, the traffic in slaves became the subject of notice in their annual meetings, until 1758, when they passed a resolution denying the right of membership to any of their people who should persist in detaining a fellow man in bondage. [29] “Besides the white congregations there are two places of worship [in Cumberland] occupied by the colored persons, one at Springtown and one at Pierceton supplied by circuit riders appointed by a colored presiding elder—both belong to the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal church.”[30]

JEWISH PRESENCE

Of all of the several score synagogues built in the nineteenth century in New Jersey, only seven survive, five in south Jersey, two of which are in Salem and one in Cumberland. To understand the curious geographical distribution of the survivors, a little history is needed.

Although the initial Jewish settlers arrived in New Jersey certainly by the early part of the eighteenth century, it was not until the 1840s that sizable numbers of German Jews settled here, largely in Newark and Passaic County. In the 1850s, additional immigrants, largely Orthodox Jews from Poland arrived, and in the 1880s, following persecution in Russia and eastern Europe, thousands immigrated to New York and New Jersey. Since many of the earliest immigrants had been largely assimilated into the social and cultural life of the Jersey cities, they were uncomfortable with the mass of Orthodox, Yiddish-speaking Jews flooding in from eastern Europe, whose dress and customs, they felt, might jeopardize their social standing. One result was that money was raised by organizations such as the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society of New York, to sponsor agricultural colonies in south Jersey, Texas

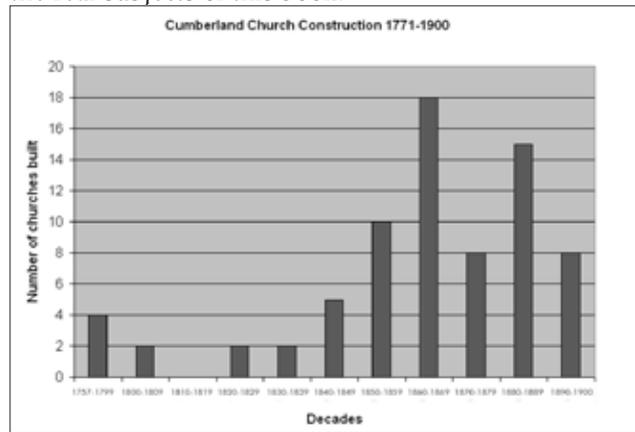
28 *Ibid.*
 29 Wacker, *Land and People*, 185.
 30 Lucius Q. C. Elmer, *History of the Early Settlement and Progress of Cumberland County, New Jersey* (Bridgeton, N.J.: George F. Nixon, 1869), 117.

and North Dakota. The first such colony was established in Alliance in 1882, joined shortly thereafter by similar colonies in Woodbine, Carmel, Rosenhayn, Norma, Brotmanville, Six Points, and Mizpah.[31]

They seem to have brought their own architectural traditions with them to this area; there are no Neoclassical, Moorish or other architecturally-exotic synagogues in Cumberland, such as are found elsewhere in the mid-Atlantic states.[32] All are more-or-less domestic in style, and there is little about the small frame building in Rosenhayn to suggest it is anything other than a residence.

THE CHURCHSCAPE

Roughly half the churches erected in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries remain. Many were razed when the congregation flourished and a larger building was required. A few burned down, and some were sold off and dismantled, carted away to be used in a barn or residence elsewhere. More than a few were simply abandoned and allowed to fall to pieces. This is an examination of what remains. It is an attempt to record and to interpret why the meetinghouses, churches and synagogues look the way they do. It has a lot to do with architecture and construction, but very little with religion other than changes in liturgy; the social, economic and cultural milieu of Cumberland County and their effect on architecture and construction are the real subjects of this book.



This graph illustrates the distribution of church construction for each decade from pre-1800 through 1900. Slightly more than a third of the structures were erected in the last two decades of the nineteenth century.

31 Ellen Eisenberg, *Jewish Agricultural Colonies in New Jersey, 1882-1920* (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1995).
 32 The synagogue in Atlantic City is Moorish in style, but only traces of those architectural elements remain.

The date of construction is potentially a very significant indicator—of settlement and subsequent growth in population or prosperity. As the graph indicates, there were four meetinghouses and churches erected in the county before 1800, then a period of 40 years (1800-1840) during which only six churches were erected.[33] A similar pattern can be seen in Salem, but up north in Hunterdon and Morris Counties, for example, the erection of churches was rather steady until spiking after the Civil War. As we shall see in the following chapter, the early decades of the nineteenth century were a period of considerable religious ferment—great revivals and camp meetings, the development and expansion among the Methodists of a system of circuits and new congregations, and a general rising affluence as the state gradually emerged from the ravages of the Revolutionary War. The hiatus in church building in Cumberland in the period leading up to what has been called the Second Great Awakening can probably be explained, not by a spiritual depression and certainly not by a dearth of preachers, but most likely in the survival rate of congregations, meetinghouses and churches erected during the period. This was a time when new congregations were formed and the first meetinghouses, some not more than a crude preaching station, were erected—often to be replaced by a larger, more substantial structure when the congregation prospered. There are numerous congregations whose mid-to-late nineteenth century building is the second or third erected by the congregation.[34]

Of the four meetinghouses and churches erected before 1800 that survive, two are brick and two are stone. It is not surprising that the first was erected by Quakers, and the next three by Presbyterians. That reflects the religious affiliation of early settlers in the county.

The scale of this study is limited to Cumberland County, but the subject matter could be considered typical of large parts of the state, indeed, of much of the mid-Atlantic region. The churches here are not much different from dozens elsewhere in New Jersey, mostly erected in the middle decades of the nineteenth

century. Most followed designs promoted by their denominations.

To quite an extent, Cumberland's churchscape is dominated by Methodist buildings, and therefore by mostly smallish, wooden-frame meetinghouse-style churches. The county is not rich in the Gothic idiom of the Anglicans and Catholics, nor of the Presbyterian and Reformed churches that found an acceptable alternative to the Gothic in the round-arch windows of the Romanesque.

What is the need for a complete inventory, some have asked—wouldn't a representative sample suffice? What value is served by the repetitiousness that can be seen in the Methodist churches in Haleyville, Woodruff, Deerfield and Union Grove, for example? My response is, first, it was not clear that there were so many similar buildings until the work was mostly done. More importantly, the distribution, date of founding and construction, and the dates when additional rooms for Sunday schools, temperance meetings and other social and civic activities were erected provides a rich fabric of evidence for the social role these buildings played in the region's history. When the physical evidence that anchors the history of an area disappears I suggest that much of the collective memory of that history also may be jeopardized or erased. The reason that Monmouth Battlefield or Washington's Crossing are visited by thousands (who are not re-enactors) every year is because they anchor the ideals and events of our history, in spite of the fact that the landscape has been altered and few physical structures from the time of the battles remain.

That many of the churches look alike might be because an ambitious builder sold several congregations on the merit and economy of his plan, or because one congregation admired the church of another and asked a builder to duplicate it. Or because the denominational authority made available inexpensive plans in an effort to upgrade the general quality of the architecture. Or because that was the kind of building the men of the congregation knew how to erect with the skills and materials at hand. Those questions can be addressed only when one is in possession of a complete inventory.

To know this churchscape is to know something of the people who settled here, flourished or with-

33 Curious, because this period is known as the Second Great Awakening, when revivals swelled the rolls of Baptist and Methodist congregations in particular and usually resulted in the formation of new congregations.

34 Nineteen new congregations were organized in the period between 1800 and 1840, all but five were Methodist or Baptist.

ered here, or maybe moved on. A close study of the religious architecture has revealed many differences among the state's counties, even adjacent counties with many shared ethnic and cultural antecedents. The churchscape of Cumberland is not identical to that of Salem or Gloucester, and certainly different from Burlington, though all are commonly referred to as Quaker colonies.

The *churchscape* of a region is an encapsulation of its defining characteristics. It ought to describe not only the common architectural styles and the denominations of the area, but also the usual location, scale, and construction of the churches and meetinghouses. The identity of the original and succeeding congregations is often significant, even crucial, as a first generation moves out and leaves their buildings to succeeding immigrants whose traditions may be different and who may make alterations to the building. That doesn't appear to have happened in Cumberland to the extent it has elsewhere; in most cases the original congregation is still in possession of the existing building. The economy of the area may be important—the Panic of 1873 truncated the ambitious plans of a number of churches in the state. Changes in liturgy, or the influence of a dominant churchman, benefactor or architect often helped to shape the design of a church, and the social and cultural values that obtained at different periods clearly had an impact on what we see today. So the term *churchscape* is a label coined in an attempt to describe a culture landscape with some common elements, sustained by local values and practices; it may help to explain why the churches of an area look the way they do and why they differ from those of another county. More importantly, it may reveal more of the economic, social and cultural mores than the biographies of leading citizens (all men) published in the late-nineteenth century histories.

Often there were several forces in play, and in all likelihood, some differences of opinion among the congregation and its building committee, as we know from the extended debates over the location of the Friends' meetinghouse in Hancock's Bridge. In the absence of the minutes of those debates and discussions we cannot know with any certainty *why* a congregation decided upon a particular plan and style, but we can note the general trends for the religious architecture

in a region, and in that manner we might make some cautious inferences about the weight given to specific features, and to the outlook and assumptions that underlie them. The inclusion of additional meeting rooms beyond those strictly needed for Sunday school reveals something about what the congregation expected of a church—no longer just sermons and sacraments. The placement of the pulpit, the size of the rostrum, and the seating arrangements—a ramped amphitheater plan with aisles radiating out from the central platform, for example, suggest something of the changes in the liturgy itself that were salient in the late nineteenth century. These, of course, are not simply architectural issues, but matters affecting the nature of the services and how the congregation viewed itself.

SUMMARY

I will outline a case for an interpretation that construction of a church in the rural areas of the county was driven largely by the activity of the circuit-riding Methodist preachers. By the 1850s other forces were afoot—a rising affluence, a merchant class in the large towns, and in general a popular culture that expressed itself as *refinement*. By that time, Methodists were the largest denomination in the state, and their buildings in the cities reflect that altered situation. In the small black and the miniscule Jewish communities, financial resources severely constrained the architectural expression of their piety. In mainstream Protestant congregations there were liturgical changes, too, as well as new manufacturing and construction methods which helped to shape the churchscape. Those factors will explain much of the distinctive characteristics of the county's antebellum churchscape.