United States Department of the Interior **National Park Service**

National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

See instructions in How to Complete National Register Forms Type all entries—complete applicable sections

Name

historic Rocky River Presbyterian Church

and or common

Location

street & number NW side of jct SR 1139 and SR 1158, also, NE side not for publication SR 1158 at jct w/SR 1139 Rocky River vic. ____ vicinity of city, town

037

North Carolina code state

Classification 3.

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
district	public	_X_ occupied	agriculture	· museum
<u>_x</u> building(s)	_x_ private	unoccupied	commercial	park
structure	both	work in progress	educational	private residence
site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	entertainment	_X religious
object	in process	<u>X</u> yes: restricted	government	scientific
2	being considered	<u> </u>	industrial	transportation
	N/A	no	military	other:

county

Owner of Property 4.

Rocky River Presbyterian Church name c/o Rev. James N. Murray

street & number Rt. 8, Box 239

Concord

ony, com	city,	town
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Х vicinity of

Cabarrus

N. C. state

Location of Legal Description 5.

Cabarrus County Courthouse courthouse, registry of deeds, etc.

street & number

N. Union St.

city, town

Concor	d,

N. C.

state

_ state

federal

Representation in Existing Surveys 6.

title The Historic Architecture of Cabarrus has this property been determined eligible? yes <u>X</u> no

date 1980

depository for survey records Survey and Planning Branch, N. C. Div. of Archives and History

city, town Raleigh state N. C. 27611

)

_ local

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7. Description

Condition Check one Check one Check one _X_ excellent deteriorated _X_ unaltered _X_ orig good ruins altered move fair unexposed	ginal site
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Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Rocky River Presbyterian Church property occupiesalmost 43 acres of rur woodlands in southwestern Cabarrus County. It is comprised of four properties: the Greco-Italianate church was built between 1860 and 1861 and is set on a wooded hillside; the frame 1839 Session House sits to the northwest of the church; a small cemetery dating to 1814 sits to the north (rear) of the church, and the Manse is located on the northwest. This handsome Greek Revival and Italianate residence adjoins the western boundary of the church property and forms the northwestern border.

The Rocky River Presbyterian Church is located on a wooded hillside near the town of Harrisburg. Rocky River Presbyterian Church is one of Cabarrus County's most notable architectural and historical landmarks. It is the best preserved example of a gorup of Presbyterian churches found throughout the piedmont that were built during the antebellum period. This is the fourth church built by a congregation that was organized in 1754. The Rocky River Church is an exceedingly impressive structure that blends Greek Revival and Italianate architecture. The brick structure was completed during the pastorate of the Reverend Daniel A. Penick who requested that a church be built in 1857 to accomodate the growing congregation of whites and blacks.

The symmetrical three-bay facade is comprised of two tall, narrow Italianate horseshoe arched windows with brick hood molds, and granite sills that flank the principal entrance. The later is unique in that it lacks a wooden pediment above the door which is a common feature found in many Cabarrus County churches built during the antebellum period. The entrance is extremely impressive with its original two-leaf eight-panel doors, a four-overfour horseshoe-arched sash window, and four ventilators all set in a broad brick hood mold. A small arched ventilator is located above the entrance.

Two Italianate pilasters with molded three-part capitals frame the facade and appear to support the returns of the original massive front gable roof. A projecting frieze with projecting headers rests directly above the pilasters. Similar pilasters delineate the four tall narrow nine-over-nine-over nine sash arched windows on eash side of the church. Two similar windows are located at the rear of the church. Louvered shutters that are duplicates of the originals cover all the fenestrations. Side entrances are located beneath the half windows and lead to the upper landing that was formerly known as the "slave gallery." There are two three-paneled paired doors on the rear sides of the church. The east rear entrance leads to the education building. Other exterior features include the two exterior rear chimneys that replaced the two flues.

All of the entrances lead into the vestibule. A closed-string staircase on the west side of the vestibule leads to the balcony whereupon the staircase becomes totally enclosed. The balcony is supported by octagonal posts with turned capitals that line both sides of the nave. There is also a separate deacon's staircase that provided access to the upper landing. The original pews are three rows deep and are less embellished than their first floor counterparts that display rounded arm rests. Beveled wood panel surrounds frame the gallery. Boards along the inside of the balustrade in the gallery are beaded but are different in length and width as well as placement. Today the chancel is located at the rear of the balcony, directly above the vestibule.

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Continuation sheet Rocky River Presb. Church Item number 7 Page 1

Two paired four-paneled doors lead into the nave which is sheathed in plaster and an acousti tile ceiling. The nave is one room deep and retains its initial nineteenth century furni-ture which includes the pews and a fine lectern flanked with flower-shaped pedestals. The choir-railing was added in 1955.

The rear east entrance leads to a brick passage way with segmental-arched openings that leads to the 1949 education building designed by J. Norman Pease of Charlotte. Great attention was paid to the design and the materials that were applied. The result of Pease's effort is a handsome multi-room addition whose similarity in design to the original church does not grossly imitate nor sharply contrast with the beauty of the Rocky River Presbyterian Church. Pease should also be commended for designing the education building as a separate addition therefore eliminating any sturctural change to the original buildings.

Located to the northwest of the church, amid a cluster of fine old oaks, is the small one-room frame Session House (2). Erected in 1839, this small structure is sheathed in plain weatherboard and features a one-bay facade. The principal entrance is comprised of paired six-paneled doors set in wide plain surrounds. Two two-over-two sash windows illuminate the interior. A small exterior chimney is located at the rear of this small structure.

Also to the north (rear) of the church is one of the church's four cemeteries. This cemetery (#3) is encircled by a handsome rubble stone wall and it is the resting place of several local historical figures as well as many of the ministers and members of the congregation who have served the church. The cemetery dates to 1814.

The Presbyterian Church manse (#4) is located approximately 75 feet from the northeast side of SR 1158 and adjoins the western side of the church lot. This house has served as the manse since its completion in 1873.

The manse is two stories high and two rooms deep. The brick dwelling features a low hip roofhip roof and two single shoulder stepped interior end chimneys laid in common bond with deocrative caps. The south chimney is original but the north chimney has been rebuilt.

A plaster sheathing covers the first floor facade but does not extend the length of the facade. The principal entrance is comprised of a two-leaf door with four octagonal panels, three sidelights over panels and a three-pane transom. All are set in plain heavy surrounds. The entrance is flanked with tall narrow six-over-six light sash Italianate windows with wooden lintels. Similar fenestration is found throughout the house. The rear entrance is similar to the principal entrance.

An attached porch shelters the principal entrance. The porch retains its original square, vernacular but classically designed columns with wide molded capitals that support the shed roof. Pilasters, similar to the columns, frame the sidelights and the ends of teh plaster sheathing. Like the brickwork, the columns, sidelights and transom are similar to the church. Other exterior features include the original kitchen , once separate from the house. The rear wall of this structure was removed to accomodate a garage which was built around 1925.

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The interior of the eight room house, now sheathed in sheetrock over the masonry walls, follows a central hall plan and displays characteristics of the Greek Revival and Victorian idioms. Three of the four-paneled doors are set in recessed panel frames that are trimmed with plain symmetrically molded surrounds and corner blocks that reflect the Greek Revival influence. Three of the four original mantels remain on the first floor and two have been retained on the second floor. The mantel in the front north room on the first floor and the north and south mantels in both rear rooms on the second floor have been placed in storage. All th the remaining mantels are Greek Revival in design, but the sawn frieze work on the mantels reflect the Italianate influence. The open-string staircase rises from the rear and thr turned newel and balusters are original.

The devastating effects of the 1886 Charleston earthquake were farreaching. The manse received some structural damage that left cracks in the rear wall. The cracks were reinforced with a steel rod. The house was refurbished in the late 1970s with modern convenienc and continues to serve the church.

The Rocky River Presbyterian Church is rich in history and has a long tradition with the descendants of the Scotch-Irish immigrants who settled this part of Cabarrus County. All the properties associated with the church are in excellend condition and the inclusion of this property in the National Register of Historic Places could spark renewed interest in this church that is slowly losing members to the larger cities and towns.

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#### Inventory:

 Rocky River Presbyterian Church 1860-61

> Highly significant property that is beautifully situated on a wooded hillside in western Cabarrus County. It is one of the most well-preserved Greco-Italianate churches of its kind in the county. The original nave is one-story high and one room deep. The church has a three bay facade and is constructed of one-to-four common bond brick. Italianate features are evident in the tall narrow nine-over-nine-over-nine sash set in round-arched windows with brick hoodmolds, the pilasters with molded capitals that frame the three-bay facade and separate the four windows on either side of the nave. Reproductions of the original louvered shutters cover the bays. Interior details include the octagonal posts that support the balcony and run along both sides of the nave. The balcony was originally the slave gallery. The sanctuary retins all of its original nineteenth century furniture. The education building is separate from the church and was designed and completed in 1949 by J. Norman Pease of Charlotte.

2. Session House 1839

> The Session House is a simple one-story one-room frame building under a front gable roof. The entrance is composed of a two-leaf eight-paneled door. Two-over-two sash windows on either side of the structure illuminate the interior. The rear exterior chimney is laid in common bond and has a decorative cap. The structure is approximately 76 feet to the rear and side of the church.

3. Cemetery 1814

> This is the fourth cemetery associated with the Rocky River Presbyterian congregation. The cemetery is surrounded by a rubble stone wall and features many fine headstones dating from 1814. The cemetery is the resting place of stour of the church's pastors, and other notable local persons.

4. Manse

1873

The notable two-story brick house features Greek Revival and Italianate details. A low hip roof shelters the house. The symmetrical three-bay facade is sheathed in plaster and the porch is supported by square columns. The entry consists of a two-leaf door with four octagonal panels set in sidelights over panels and under a three-pane transom. Two interior chimneys also laid in common bond once provided heat to the eight-room house. The residence retains five of its original Greek Revival/Italianate mantels with sawn friezes. The open-string stair rises from the rear of the center hall. The newel and balusters are original.

## 8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—C	heck and justify below		
prehistoric	archeology-prehistoric	community planning	landscape architectu	re_X religion
1400–1499	archeology-historic	conservation	law	science
1500–1599	agriculture	economics	literature	sculpture
1600–1699	<u>X</u> architecture	education	military	social/
1700–1799	art	engineering	music	humanitarian
<u>X</u> 1800–1899	commerce	X exploration/settlement	t philosophy	theater
1900-	communications	industry	politics/government	transportation
		invention		other (specify)

Specific dates 1839, 1861, 1873 Builder/Architect Unknown

#### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Rocky River Presbyterian Church is comprised of four properties on approximately 43 acres near Harrisburg in southwestern Cabarrus County. Set among the woodland hills, the Greco-Italianate Rocky River Presbyterian Church is the nucleus of the church property. Erected between 1860 and 1861, the church is the fourth house of worship for a congregation that was organized by Scotch-Irish settlers in the mid-eighteenth century. A Session House that was built in 1839 still stands behind the church. The cemetery that dates to 1814 is located directly behind the church. An education wing was added to the church in 1949. The manse is located on property that adjoins the church. This residence was constructed between 1871 and 1873 and reflects both the Greek Revival and Italianate influence in residential architecture. The Rocky River Presbyterian church and its attendant buildings are a testament to the Scotch-Irish settlers who brought one of their most important cultural institutions, their Presbyterian faith, to the new world in the hope that they could worship freely.

#### CRITERIA ACCESSMENT:

- A. The Rocky River Presbyterian Church is associated with the settlement of Scotch-Irish immigrants along the Rocky River in southwestern Cabarrus County during the early to mid eighteenth century. A predominant number of "Ulster Scots" settled throughout North Carolina following the Test Act of 1702, the famines of 1726-27 and 1740-41, and the migration of Scotch-Irish settlers from Pennsylvania. These immigrants brought their Presbyterian traditions with them to Cabarrus County.
- B. The Rocky River Presbyterian Church is associated with a number of religious leaders who played a role in local and national affairs. Most notable among these are the Reverend Alexander Craighead, the church's first official minister who served from 1758 to 1766; the Reverend Hezekiah Balch, an active political leader and ardent supporter of American Independence; the Reverend John Makemie Wilson who served as pastor from 1802 to 1831 during the most prosperous times in the church's history; and the Reverend Daniel A. Penick who served the church for 35 years beginning in 1835. Penick's leadership and popularity created the need for the present_day church.
- C. The buildings reflect the architectural forms that were popular in the early and midnineteenth century. The church and manse embody many Greek Revival and Italianate characteristics.
- D. The property being nominated is likely to yield archaeological evidence valuable to the understanding of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

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#### Criteria Assessment cont'd.

E. The Rocky River Presbyterian Church has one cemetery that has been included not only because of its close proximity to the church, but because of its significant age, the graves of persons of great local importance, and its pastoral setting. Some of the notable figures buried in the cemetery are William White, one of the "Black Boys" involved in the Regulator Movement (1768-71); and four of the church's early ministers: John McKenzie Wilson, Daniel Allen Penick, Thomas Hugh Spence, and George Marshall.

_____

The Rocky River Presbyterian Church, Session House, cemetery and manse are located in southwest Cabarrus County. The church has served as the focus for a large area of the county and its Scotch-Irish population. For many years the entire area was rural, as the immediate surroundings of the church are today. The Rodgers family was supposedly the first in the area. John Rodgers came from Pennsylvania in 1732 followed by William White and Robert Harris and other Scotch-Irish Settlers. The Scotch-Irish descendants still are the predominant segment of the population in southwest Cabarrus County.

As early as 1744 Presybterians in North Carolina had been in contact with churches in Pennsylvania, seeking ministerial support. A mission to the south from the Old Side Synod of Philadelphia in 1753 was sepcifically directed to the area around the Catawba River. The first known preacher in the vicinity of Rocky River was Hugh McAden who came to the area in 1753 and again in 1754. McAden found a series of meeting houses already in use. Even as McAden was preaching, the New Side Synod of New York appointed John Clark to supply vacancies in Virginia and North Carolina, including the Rocky River Church.² Clark's words found ready ears among the Scotch-Irish population. The first house of worship, a log building, had already been erected in 1754 near the river.³ The first regular pastor, Alexander Craighead, arrived in 1758, and served as pastor until his death in 1766.⁴

Criaghead was succeeded in 1769 by Hezekiah James Balch, who would also serve the Poplar Tent Presbyterian Church. Balch was yery active in the political arena and was a staunch supporter of the revolutionary cause. At the end of his ministry, in 1776, the second log church was constructed within sight of the first building. The next pastor, Robert, Alexander was suspended in 1792 for heresy of universalism, a contradiction of the Presbyterian dogma of the elect. He was succeeded in 1793 by Alexander Caldwell. The later was the last minister to serve both the Rocky River Church and the Poplar Tent Church. Caldwell remained in the area until 1797.

The present site of the church was obtained by the congregation in 1804 with the purchase of 3.15 acres of land that included water rights to a nearby spring. Three years later a frame church was constructed. Older cemeteries continued to be used until the first burial at the new church in 1814.

This building, constructed during the pastorate of John Makemie Wilson (pastor 1802-1831), was the result of the church's growth in membership and prominence. Early membership statistics are not available, but by 1826 Rocky River had 390 communicants. Also under Wilson, the Rocky River Academy was incorporated in 1812, and Wilson gave instructions in classical studies.

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The next pastor, Daniel Lindsay (1801-1880), only served from 1832 to 1834, but left the congregation with a membership of 500. Lindsay left to serve as a missionary to South Africa from 1835-59 and 1862-73.

His successor, Daniel A. Penick (pastor 1835-70), spent his first two years competing with the growing Methodist movement. Membership at Rocky River dropped to 400 in 1836 but resurged to 475 the next year. The fluctuation was the result of the Methodist evangelical effort. The Presbyterians responded by invoking the full intensity of their doctrines to hold church members. The Reverend Penick was only the pastor-elect until he was confirmed in 1837. Penick undoubtedly provided a much needed factor of leadership and unity.

During Penick's pastorate, two of the three extant structures were built. Six more acres were bought in 1823, and in 1839 the Session House was constructed on the property, holding its first meeting in April of that year.¹³ Another two and a half acres were bought in 1856.¹⁴ In addition, the membership rose from 529 in 1839 to 616 in 1860. The Reverend Penick also reached out to the black population, and 176 of the 1860 communicants were black. Thus the need for a building was acute in terms of total membership. This also undoubtedly produced a closer association between whites and blacks in the crowded frame facility than the conventional wisdom of the time allowed. Consequently, a brick church with slave gallery was authorized in June 1860. The church was dedicated May 2, 1861. Its construction cost was \$6,000.

Rocky River Presbyterian Church suffered a large post-war membership loss in the departure of its black membership in 1867. The membership fell from 616 in 1860 to 332 seven years later. On the third Sunday of April, 1867, the Reverend Luke Dorland, of the northern branch of the Presbyterian Church, was allowed to preach at Rocky River. Although his sermon was not objectionable to the Reverend Penick, Dorland had mingled with the freedmen and returned three weeks later to organize a separate congregation for the blacks. By mid-1868, Dorland had formed congregations in Concord, Poplar Tent, Bethpage, and Ramah. Hi ministry touched over 365 people. Rocky River (colored) Presbyterian Church first appears j the minutes of the Presbyterian General Assembly, U.S.A. in 1868, with a record of 100 members. By 1871, it had grown to 161 members and a Sunday School membership of 200. The church had also changed its name to Bellefont by 1871 In the wake of the war other demoninations were also evangelizing the Rocky River area. After 1871, the church responded by instituting a "floating" Sunday afternoon service which met in the outlying areas of the church.

Rocky River remained the only white Presbyterian church in southwestern Cabarrus County until the organization of the Zion Church in 1873. By this time the town of Harrisburg was beginning to emerge as a commercial center. It was first mentioned as Harris' Depot in 1869, and by 1872 Rocky River Church's township was served by the Harrisburg Post Office. The town had a population of forty in 1890 and sixty in 1896. This modest growth centered around a railway depot and led to the formation of Harrisburg Presbyterian Church in 1903. It superceded Zion Church which dissolved a year later. Meanwhile, a third Presbyterian congregation, White Hall, was set up in 1896 on Concord Road.

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The Rocky River Church Manse was built for Joseph Bingham Mack (pastor 1871-1876). Traditionally the ministers who served Rocky River purchased a home in the surrounding area, but the local economic conditions in the wake of the Civil War made this practice impossible Rovery Harvey Morrison, a highly respected elder, provided a temporary solution by moving his family to two smaller houses on his farm and donating his home to the Reverend Mack unti a manse could be built.²² The manse was completed in 1873 at a cost of \$3,000.

There have been some changes to the church and to its property since 1873. The church membership has remained steady at about 300 members. The church was reroofed and painted in 1883 and wired for electricity in 1939. The largest physical change has been the addition of an education building. After six years of effort, it was completed in 1949 at a cost of \$82,500. During the construction of the education building central heat was installed. A new organ and chimes were contributed in 1947. Another new roof was put on in 1957 and some rearrangement occurred in the sancturay the next year. The manse has received heat, plumbing and a garage over the years. The manse also received a crack in its rear walls as a result of the 1886 Charleston earthquake. The damaged area was reinforced with a steel rod.

The cemetery is an integral part of the church's development. Dating from 1814, it is an important historical record of the close-knit community in Rocky River. Willian White, one of the "Black Boys" in the Regulator conflict (1768-71) is buried there. It is also the resting place for pastors John McKinzie, Daniel Allen Penick, Thomas Hugh Spence and George Marshall Wilcox.

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¹⁶Spence, pp. 101-104, 186.

¹⁷<u>Ibid</u>., pp. 107-108.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 112.

¹⁹Levi Branson, <u>Branson's North Carolina Business Directory</u>, 1869, p. 23; <u>1872</u>, p. 43; 1890, p. 137; 1896, p. 137.

²⁰Spence, pp. 140-41.

²¹Ibid., p. 131.

²²Adelaide Lore, Eugenia Lore, and Robert H. Morrison, <u>The Morrison Family of</u> the Rocky River Settlement of North Carolina: History and Genealogy (Charlotte: Observer Publishing Co., 1950), p. 62; Adelaide Lore and Eugenia Lore, <u>Open the Gates and Roam</u> Cabarrus With Us. (Salisbury, North Carolina: Rowan Business Forms, 1971), p. 26.

²³Spense, p. 158; Ford and Blume, p. 17.

²⁴Spense, pp. 154-160; Concord <u>Tribune</u>, "Windshield Tour of Cabarrus County," (n.d.), (A historical map of the county.)

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# 9. Major Bibliographical References

See Continuation Sheet.

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Chief of R	legistration						

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