

South Park Presbyterian Church  
Newark, New Jersey  
Essex Co.

HABS NJ-182

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PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA  
District of New Jersey

Historic American Buildings Survey  
Seymour Williams, District Officer  
133 Central Avenue, Rahway, New Jersey

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South Park Presbyterian Church  
 Newark, Essex County, New Jersey

Owners: The Trustees of the South Park Presbyterian Church

Erected: 1853

Architect: John Welsh

Builders: Jonas Reeve - Mason construction  
 Ezra Reeve - Carpenter construction  
 J.W. Rice & Co. - Painting & Decorating construction

Present condition: The church proper is as built; the Sunday school was a later addition.

Number of stories: One story with gallery; two story addition to rear of later date.

Materials of construction: Foundation - Ledge blue stone  
 Floors of wood

The front exterior wall and the towers of cut sandstone from Nova Scotia, side walls and rear of brick

Interior walls- Frame, lath and plaster

Roof- pitched portions are of slate, flat portions tar roofing

Early in 1852 it was felt that a new church was needed at the southern limits of the city and a meeting was held at which a committee was appointed to work up interest and solicit funds. On January 29, 1853, after a

third meeting at which officers for the new organization were elected, a certificate of incorporation was filed. The site selected, now the intersection of Clinton Avenue and Broad Street, was purchased from Mr. Samuel B. Brown. The corner stone was laid on October 29th of the same year.

The plans of Mr. John Welsh were approved on the general lines of a non descript Eighteenth century church, St. John the Evangelist, Westminster, wrongly attributed to both Sir Christopher Wren and Sir John Vanbrugh, but actually designed and executed by Thomas Archer, an architect of very mediocre ability. Who suggested the design is not known, but Welsh sailed to England to study his subject and returned with a design which in simplicity of conception and proportion was eminently superior to his prototype. He had, however, over stayed his leave and the building was commenced six weeks before he landed, with separate contracts between the church and the several trades, even to one with a concern in Nova Scotia to furnish the cut stone.

Inspection of the minutes of the trustees indicates a continuous dissatisfaction with the "neglect" of the architect who was held responsible among numerous other complaints for injuries or lost on the water of one consignment of the stone and also with the fact that the stone towers were not as tall as originally contracted for and on his submitting a final bill for services rendered. This was set aside by a counter claim that he had already been overpaid. The fact that the building stands now after eighty years of constant service and contact with the elements, as sound as when it was completed, speaks well for the ability and integrity of John Welsh.

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Bibliography:

Record of the Twenty-fifth anniversary  
of South Park Presbyterian Church,  
Newark, New Jersey, October 27th to  
30th, 1878. Newark, Amzi Pierson & Co.  
1879

(See historical address of John P.  
Jackson pp 58-80)

1853-1903 Semi-Centennial of the South  
Park Presbyterian Church of Newark,  
New Jersey, October 25th-29th, 1903  
N.P. N.D.

Seventy-fifth Anniversary of the  
South Park Presbyterian Church  
Newark, New Jersey

N.P. 1928

Michael Stillman, local historian

Walter C. Ruth  
Supervising Historian

Approved:

Seymour Williams  
District Officer

Reviewed  
Sept. 2, 1936  
TTW