

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.



1. Name of Property

Historic name: Brooklyn Presbyterian Church

Other names/site number: Brooklyn Preserve

Name of related multiple property listing:
N/A

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

2. Location

Street & number: 1433 12th Avenue

City or town: Oakland State: California County: Alameda

Not For Publication: Vicinity:

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

national **statewide** **local**

Applicable National Register Criteria:

A **B** **C** **D**

<p>_____</p> <p>Signature of certifying official/Title:</p> <p>_____</p> <p>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</p>	<p>_____</p> <p>Date</p>
---	---------------------------------

<p>In my opinion, the property <input type="checkbox"/> meets <input type="checkbox"/> does not meet the National Register criteria.</p>	
<p>_____</p> <p>Signature of commenting official:</p> <p>_____</p> <p>Title :</p>	<p>_____</p> <p>Date</p> <p>_____</p> <p>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</p>

Brooklyn Presbyterian Church
Name of Property

Alameda, California
County and State

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
- determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private:
- Public – Local
- Public – State
- Public – Federal

Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

- Building(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object

Brooklyn Presbyterian Church
Name of Property

Alameda, California
County and State

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u> </u>	buildings
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	sites
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	structures
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	objects
<u>1</u>	<u> </u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

RELIGION: religious facility

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

RECREATION AND CULTURE: auditorium

WORK IN PROGRESS

Brooklyn Presbyterian Church
Name of Property

Alameda, California
County and State

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE VICTORIAN: Romanesque

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: Foundation: Brick; Walls: Drop Siding; Roof:
Asphalt Shingle; Windows: Stained Glass;
Doubled Doors: Wood; Gables: Wood;
Archways: Wood

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary Paragraph

Brooklyn Presbyterian Church, built in 1887, is located on a corner lot of approximately 140' x 150' in an area of East Oakland once known as the township of Brooklyn. The 12,383 sq-ft, two-story redwood building has a balloon frame on a brick and mortar foundation. It sits on a slightly raised knoll amidst a mixed industrial and residential neighborhood. The knoll and height of its two towers allows the tips of the tower spires to be seen from miles away. Stairs branching out to the sidewalk on East 15th Street give access to three arched wood-paneled doubled entrance doors. A back parking lot and small lawn are accessible through a gated drive from 15th Street. The church is divided into two main sections—the auditorium and the Sunday school—of a design plan unique to its era. The Sunday school room, with movable partitions, was designed to be configured into 14 different rooms. The exterior is comprised of original drop siding in deteriorating but stable condition. The main roof with its two cupolas was originally constructed of wood cedar shakes and has since been patched over or replaced with asphalt shingles. The scale-shaped wood shingles on the decorative pent roofs are original with patches missing or in

Brooklyn Presbyterian Church
Name of Property

Alameda, California
County and State

poor condition. The three-stage tower that holds the original bell has sustained the worst disrepair of the building. The windows are among the largest stained glass windows in Oakland and for the most part are intact with their original glass, though there is much disrepair and damage. The interior woodwork of the auditorium is crafted of original redwood and black walnut and is well preserved. All Victorian Romanesque details are preserved in good condition. Alterations have been few and the property retains historic integrity.

Narrative Description

12th Avenue Façade

The auditorium portion of the church has an irregular cross plan formed by two intersecting roof gables. A three-stage 66-foot corner tower is set in the ell of the gable-roofed section at the street corner and is topped with a steeple reaching 100 feet high. The tower has paired windows under a pent hood on brackets in the first stage; the second stage has two large round-arched stained glass windows and terminates in an entablature with trefoil frieze and bracketed cornice surmounted by a pent roof around the tower, freestanding at this stage. Corners have pilasters formed by corner boards. The last stage that houses the belfry has three round-arched louvered vents on each face set in a molded architrave and capped with a projecting cornice. Above the cornice rises the polygonal spire, which has projecting trefoil pediment forms on each face. The ornamental cross sitting atop the spire is intact. Major water damage has compromised the exterior and interior finishes. Holes in the spire and roof below it exposed the tower to weather and to nesting pigeons.

The second stage 12th Avenue façade is missing its three-paneled stained glass window that once matched its replica on the 15th Street façade, which is still intact. The window reportedly fell out during a storm in November 2013. The exterior walls of the church are clad in drop siding, with scale-shaped imbricated shingles in the gable ends, set out against the boxed cornice and supported on a row of brackets. The siding is in fair condition, determined by chipped and peeling paint. Aside from the fallen window and some wood shingles missing from the decorative roofs, all architectural elements remain intact and in place. The shed-roofed entrance on the 12th Avenue façade leads directly to the stairwell in the Sunday school portion of the building. Across the center section of the façade, where the pastor's study is located with the ladies' parlor below it, is a shallow, rectangular bay window identical on both stories. Four single light, double-hung windows with stained glass transoms fenestrate the first floor of the bay that has a pent roof on brackets.

The upper part of the gable roof end is detailed like that of the church and has a trefoil louvered vent. A gabled portico with trefoil in the pediment and turned posts is set on one side. Twenty-foot-high stained glass windows with six long panes feature in the auditorium portion and a smaller thirteen-foot-high stained glass window with four panes features in the gallery above the Sunday school. There are significant breaks and sagging in the auditorium window, visible only from the inside due to fiberglass protective coverings placed on the outside of the windows, obstructing views from 12th Avenue.

Brooklyn Presbyterian Church
Name of Property

Alameda, California
County and State

East 15th Street Façade

A two-stage tower occupies the ell on the other side of the East 15th Street façade and has a steeple reaching 80 feet. This tower is very similar to the three-stage tower but without the belfry stage, and its spire's ornamental cross is missing. Similarly as well, the walls are clad in drop siding, with scale-shaped imbricated shingles in the gable ends, set out against the boxed cornice and supported on a row of brackets. A triple-arched entranceway from East 15th Street precedes the shed-roofed vestibule. Wood-paneled doubled doors are set in round-arched architraves with molded heads on foliated columns. Archways are divided by pilasters with decorated caps and finials between which are triangular pediments with cut-out trefoils. The entrance is reached by a branching stair set parallel to the façade. This stair replaced the original stair that ran perpendicular to the façade in 1960.¹ Another one-story wing with hipped roof was added to the right of the East 15th Street elevation in 1922.² A square second story tower is placed in the center of the façade above a large first floor round-arch window, similar to the round arch windows of the main church. The tower terminates with the same bracketed cornice and trefoil pediment treatment used on the towers of the main church. The wing has a separate entrance on the left side, adjacent to the main church building.

West Façade

The back side of the church mirrors its façade facing 12th Avenue and retains all the same architectural elements. There are, however, two deviations from the 12th Avenue façade. The first deviation is the replacement of the arched stained glass window in the gallery with a single rectangular window of clear glass. No permit or record leaves the cause of this unknown. The second deviation is the addition of a fire escape door and stair leading to the gallery. The date of this addition is unknown. It was likely at the same time the ceiling was closed off in the Sunday school to make the gallery a room of its own in 1963.³ The fire escape stairs were rebuilt in 1980 for safety reasons.⁴ The yard that once held a shed and a hitching stall for horses has been cleared of all buildings and structures, and is still maintained as a yard.

Auditorium

The roof of the auditorium is supported by strong trusses made of varnished timbers that are exposed to view from below. Above these timbers is a plastered, dome ceiling, sectioned into four-foot-square panels by varnished beams and cross timbers. The ceiling at its lowest height is about thirty feet and at the highest point about fifty feet. At the top of the dome sits a cupola with four stained glass windows. The auditorium seats between five to six hundred people in pews made of black walnut and redwood. The horseshoe-shaped balcony, completed in 1891,⁵ adds even more seating, accessed by a set of symmetrical stairwells on either side of the entryway vestibule. In addition to the main entrance, there are two other entrances, one upon either side of the organ loft, that lead from the auditorium to the Sunday school portion. The false wooden

¹ City of Oakland, Permit B91450.

² Hovey M. Hovagimian, *One Century of Service: A Historical Sketch of Brooklyn Presbyterian, 1861-1961* (Oakland, The Church, 1961), 9.

³ City of Oakland, Permit C6927.

⁴ City of Oakland, Permit D13461.

⁵ Hovagimian, 6.

Brooklyn Presbyterian Church
Name of Property

Alameda, California
County and State

pipes in the organ loft are intricately carved and gilded with floral patterns to match the grates of the innovative heating system and the original carpet. The ornamented brass pillars supporting the balcony were painted over in 1975, the carpet was updated in 2006, and the heating system was replaced in 2009. The auditorium is well preserved and in good condition and remains generally unchanged despite various upgrades.

Sunday School

The Sunday school room is 48' x 60' with a gallery located above that is twelve feet deep on three sides. Slat partitions made of white ash, eight feet in length, were drawn down from the ceiling underneath the gallery—slightly overlapping, wrapped in canvas and fastened together with brass ribbons—and in addition to triple sliding doors that drew back to the outer walls, they provided the Sunday School the option to divide into fourteen separate classrooms. These partitions are no longer in use because a ceiling was installed in 1963 to separate the Sunday school from the dome in the gallery, sectioning off the gallery into its own room entirely.⁶ The dome of the gallery is of similar construction and octagonal shape to the one in the auditorium, is also topped with a cupola, whose original stained glass has been replaced with clear glass, and is to a smaller scale. A kitchen, rare for churches of the time, was outfitted before even the pews were installed. It connected to the main Sunday school room via a pass window, since closed off.

Upstairs, next to the gallery on the west side, is a large room once reserved for the infant class; an entirely separate room of its own belonging to the Sunday school portion of the building. On the opposite side of the classroom is the pastor's study, which houses a large wooden bookcase 15 feet in length and 11 feet high, crafted of the finest details and ornamentation. It is well preserved with all functioning original keys and locks. The one and one-half-inch white oak floors butt up against the base of the bookcase, dating the bookcase's installation with the completion of the building in 1887. The existing finishing details of the Sunday school portion indicate that wainscoting decorated every wall of every room, along with trim and moldings of the same period style. Most of it remains in good condition but has been painted. Water damage from leaks in the roof can be found in every room. Its severity does not detract from the overall historical integrity. While some larger structural changes have been made, the period details of the interior remain unchanged.

Integrity

The property retains all aspects of historic integrity. Minor changes were made over the years to interior materials for maintenance and safety. Larger changes—including the addition of a ceiling separating the Sunday school room from the gallery, an added egress leading directly from the gallery to the backyard, and the building addition of the ladies' parlor on the East 15th Street façade—were practicalities realized by the Brooklyn Presbyterian Church and subsequent Grace Temple Baptist Church. These changes done in historic taste in no way effect the historic feeling or association.

⁶ City of Oakland, Permit C6927.

Brooklyn Presbyterian Church
Name of Property

Alameda, California
County and State

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- B. Removed from its original location
- C. A birthplace or grave
- D. A cemetery
- E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F. A commemorative property
- G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

Brooklyn Presbyterian Church
Name of Property

Alameda, California
County and State

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1887

Significant Dates

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Bordwell, George A.

Ingerson & Gore

Brooklyn Presbyterian Church
Name of Property

Alameda, California
County and State

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

Brooklyn Presbyterian Church is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places at the local level of significance under Criterion C in the area of Architecture for its distinctive characteristics of the Romanesque Revival style, applied to a religious building, and representative of American late nineteenth century fine craftsmanship and innovation. The period of significance is 1887, the year of construction. The church satisfies Criteria Consideration A: Religious Properties because it derives its primary significance from architectural distinction as evaluated under Criterion C.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

Romanesque Revival Style

With an emphasis on convenience, economy, and good taste, the Romanesque style was popular amongst many growing congregations in the late 1800s. The Romanesque Revival movement was in full swing in the United States thanks to influential architect Henry Hobson Richardson, who studied the style during his education in Europe in the 1870s. Even as early as 1845, the first Anglo Americans settling in the East Bay of California brought with them their Romantic notions of architecture and living from east of the Mississippi.⁷ Built in 1887, Brooklyn Presbyterian Church embodies distinctive characteristics of the Romanesque Revival style.

A defining feature of the Romanesque style is the semi-circular arch,⁸ commonly used for window and door openings, and for decorative purposes. All of the prominent stained glass windows in the auditorium and gallery are round-arched, beautifully articulated in the Romanesque-style carpentry of the trimwork. Including the stained glass windows and clear-glazed windows, a total of 14 round-arched windows are featured on the building. The three doubled entrance doors on the 15th Street façade are themselves semi-circular and housed under three decorative round arches.

This row of entrance doors on the 15th Street façade is further defined as an arcade in Romanesque architecture. This characteristic has been cleverly incorporated into each stained glass window, which consists of a row of individual semi-circular panels. The largest windows in the auditorium have a row of six arched panels comprising its arcade. The other stained glass windows consist of a row of two to four arched panels.

Large, square towers, rising without diminishing through their stages, are a staple of Romanesque architecture. They are often found on the west façade in pairs, and usually clearly

⁷ "Romanesque Revival," *Architectural Styles of America and Europe*, 2012, <https://architecturestyles.org/romanesque-revival/> accessed April 5, 2017.

⁸ Shah Amal, "Introduction to Romanesque Architecture," *Slideshare*, 2015, <https://www.slideshare.net/amalgshah/introduction-to-romanesque-architecture> accessed April 5, 2017.

Brooklyn Presbyterian Church
Name of Property

Alameda, California
County and State

defined through each stage by horizontal courses, with the number and size of openings increasing as the towers rise.⁹ Brooklyn Presbyterian Church's pair of square towers are not located on the west façade as that would put them in the back of the building, obscured from view. Both towers fit the Romanesque style as each stage is clearly delineated and the first stage has one window with two panes followed by the second stage, which has a three-paned window.

Brooklyn Presbyterian Church was also notably built with practical characteristics in mind. Pastor Dr. Chapman thought it a better use of funds to purchase a large lot, not employ excessive ornamentation, and take advantage of readily available local materials.¹⁰ The industrial revolution of the early 1800s facilitated low-cost and mass-produced materials such as wood sourced from nearby forests, easier to turn, saw, and manufacture in intricate ways.¹¹ Along the same practicality, the façades are slightly less ornate than a typical building of Romanesque architecture, lending an air of modesty in line with Dr. Chapman's tastes.

A mix of architectural styles was common practice with revival architecture and Brooklyn Presbyterian Church exhibits a few of those characteristics. Trefoil and quatrefoil symbols of the Gothic style are found on the gabled pediments of the exterior, as well as on the interior vents of both domes in the auditorium and the gallery. The auditorium balcony has carved in it a repeating design of a quatrefoil positioned over a horseshoe arched shape, originating in Moorish architecture.¹² The Sunday school stairwell also has this symbol carved in repetition. Geometric and foliated patterns are the main subject matter for the stained glass windows, a surprisingly unorthodox choice for a religious building. With their bold and bright colors, use of jewels, rondels, and stylized plant motifs, the stained glass windows are of the American Aesthetic Movement that proliferated from 1870-1890.¹³ The roof of the auditorium is supported by strong trusses—heavy, varnished timbers exposed to view—that lend a medieval interpretation. The square panels of the ceiling dome, supported by exposed varnished beams, bolster this medieval style.

An interesting and unique geometric element found in the most decoratively dedicated rooms is the incorporation of the octagonal shape. The domed ceiling in the auditorium has eight sides, which supports an eight-sided cupola, and from which suspends a central light fixture that is hung from a wooden octagonal ring. The gallery in the Sunday school portion features a smaller version of the octagonal-shaped ceiling dome that leads to an octagonal-shaped cupola. The octagon, and particularly the octagonal-shaped dome, is a symbol derived from early Christianity.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ *The Christian Home*, Oakland: First Presbyterian Church, v.2, no. 8: Aug. 1887.

¹¹ Edgar J. Hinkel and William E. McCann, *Oakland 1852-1938: Some Phases of the Social, Political and Economic History of Oakland, California [2 volumes]* (Oakland: Oakland Public Library as a report of Official Project No. 465-03-3-337, conducted under the auspices of the Works Progress Administration, 1939), 433.

¹² Theresa Grupico, *The Dome in Christian and Islamic Sacred Architecture* (Baton Rouge, LA: The Forum on Public Policy, 2011), 9.

¹³ "Featured Windows, September 2005," Michigan Stained Glass Census, 2005

<http://www.michiganstainedglass.org/month/month.php?month=09&year=2005> accessed April 5, 2017.

Brooklyn Presbyterian Church
Name of Property

Alameda, California
County and State

Innovations

Brooklyn Presbyterian Church was one of the local leaders in change for how church buildings were constructed in response to the growth of their congregations. Rather than construct an entire building dedicated to one auditorium, fitting everyone into one room and leaving little space for other activities, Dr. Chapman worked with local architect George A. Bordwell to fulfill his ideas for a new kind of church. His innovations sought a style that better suited his goals for religious education and community. With a focus on function—such as the congregation being able to see and hear clearly, dedicated space for storage, versatile arrangements for theological gatherings, and space for a wide range of activities—the interior floor plan designed by Bordwell and Chapman was very modern when compared to its traditional brethren.¹⁴

One key development ordered by Dr. Chapman was the prioritized role of the Sunday school. Recognizing the Sunday school as a powerful auxiliary, the Sunday school room and its gallery actually seated more people than the auditorium. With the implementation of movable partitions, there were made available from one large room fourteen separate classrooms: an extremely modern innovation for its time. Dr. Chapman received suggestions for the Sunday school from John Wanamaker who led the National Register-listed Bethany Sunday school in Philadelphia, which at the time was thought to be the best designed in the world.¹⁵

The details of interior decoration reflect the ecclesiastical trends in the United States according to the 1853 *Congregational Churches in the United States' Book of Plans for Churches and Parsonages*. Ecclesiastical congregations were encouraged to hire professional architects to create an environment that better reflected the comforts of the home. Stained and varnished woodwork, carpeting, cushioned pews, and walls with stenciling were common elements. The idea of “good taste” was touted to affect the numbers in church membership.¹⁶ No doubt these details were highly valued by the members of Brooklyn Presbyterian Church. The craftsmanship of the woodwork throughout the building, and especially in the auditorium, remains breathtaking: Brass pillars, humble yet handsome, support the upper balcony in its horseshoe outline. The pews have high backs of redwood and black walnut ends. Red carpet with black tones of velvet was chosen for its rich warmth. The false wood pipes of the organ are intricately engraved. Even the heating grates have a floral pattern. The timbers in the auditorium are all beautifully varnished, and the stained glass has rich tones that are best enjoyed from inside. The pulpit is made of black mahogany and quite compact; Dr. Chapman preferred a smaller choir to encourage congregational singing.

Still a luxury in 1887, electricity powered every light in the building through a system of knob and tube wiring still in use. Even more advanced for the time was the extensive network of bells that could be rung from any room. “As he stands behind the pulpit, the pastor can touch a button and summon a janitor from the front vestibule, or touch another and call him from the rear. The

¹⁴ *The Christian Home*.

¹⁵ “A Modern Church: The Splendid New Edifice of the Brooklyn Presbyterians,” *Oakland Enquirer*, Special Edition, December 24, 1887.

¹⁶ Gwen W. Steege, *The Book of Plans and the Earthly Romanesque Revival in the United States: A Study in Architectural Patronage*, *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, XLVI: September, 1987, 215-225.

Brooklyn Presbyterian Church
Name of Property

Alameda, California
County and State

electric circuit is even extended to connect the pastor's study with his residence, a block away, so that by a simple code of signals he can hold converse with his family."¹⁷

Local Historical Context

Brooklyn Presbyterian Church is one of Oakland's oldest and best-preserved places of worship. It was a major center of local religious and community life that was thought to have transformed the rough neighborhood around it into "one of the most desirable residential districts of the expanding Oakland."¹⁸ The church was constructed in 1887 to meet the demands of a growing congregation. Many mainstream denominations were in need of replacing their smaller and simpler pioneer churches around the turn of the twentieth century. By that time, the railway had finally reached town and industrial and residential growth brought a sharp increase in population. Brooklyn Presbyterian Church numbered 250 in members at the time of construction and in five years' time had increased to 500 members.¹⁹

The cornerstone of Brooklyn Presbyterian Church was laid July 16, 1887. A block of marble presented by Oakland's Amador Marble Company marked the completion of the church's construction. The official coronation occurred later that year on Christmas Day, where "a vast concourse of people" assembled to witness the ceremonies, which included the presentation of speeches and hymns sung amidst a copious display of flowers and evergreens, swinging in "graceful pendant boughs from the rough scantling."²⁰ Reverend W. H. Hamilton spoke of the early struggles of the church when a little band fought against "the fearful odds of pioneer life" and described the 1861 establishment as the First Presbyterian Church of Brooklyn. Addresses were made by the pastor, Dr. E.S. Chapman, and visiting ministers from around the San Francisco Bay Area. The organ, which came from the recently dissipated Starr King Church in San Francisco, furnished music for the occasion. A complete account of the day's festivities, the names of residents who supported the church and its broad-ranging activities, and a list of the cornerstone's contents appears in the featured article cited in *The Christian Home*.

The building's total cost at completion was listed at \$35,000, roughly \$870,000 in 2017. The lot itself was purchased from Moses Chase for \$5,000. The added carved redwood balcony and the unique, redwood octagonal spoke-like assembly from which hangs the center lantern fixture was built and furnished in 1891 for \$4,373.

The history of the stained glass windows is a case study of stained glass design, manufacture, and trade at the turn of the twentieth century. W. H. Wells founded the Wells Glass Company of Chicago in 1870, and by 1886 it was described as "the most complete and extensive Ornamental Glass Factory in the West—if not the entire country."²¹ The company's prestige grew and was one of eleven studios that displayed their work at the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893 in Chicago. While there have been no systematic studies to determine the history of stained glass in

¹⁷ A Modern Church.

¹⁸ Edward A. Wicher, *The Presbyterian Church in California, 1849-1927* (New York: F. H. Hitchcock, 1927), 116.

¹⁹ Hovagimian, 19-21.

²⁰ A Modern Church.

²¹ F.M. Whipple, "Art Glass," *The American Architect and Building News* (Boston: October 2, 1886), 8.

Brooklyn Presbyterian Church
Name of Property

Alameda, California
County and State

the San Francisco Bay region, there are definitely a number of Wells Glass Company windows in the area. The *San Francisco Chronicle* describes “handsome glass screens set in oak frames manufactured by the Wells Glass Company of Chicago and furnished by the local agents Hausmann Brothers,” set in San Francisco’s first skyscraper, the 1889 San Francisco Chronicle building.²² Stained glass is an element consistent with all styled churches and Brooklyn Presbyterian Church has some of the largest stained glass windows in Oakland.²³

The church’s historical records provide descriptive accounts of the impacts it had on an ever-changing and growing community, spanning over a century of service. Three different missionary societies were formed by the congregation, attributing to a strong presence in the missionary field. One missionary, Grace Russell, was sent to Persia.²⁴ The church extended its reach to assist a Sunday school in the Fruitvale area and helped to found High Street Presbyterian Church. After the 1906 earthquake, the congregation opened its doors to refugees, giving shelter to hundreds for days. During this time Brooklyn Presbyterian Church also became the spiritual home of the Chinese girls and staff of the famous “Cameron House” at 920 Sacramento Street, San Francisco.²⁵ The church continued to serve the Presbyterian community of East Oakland until 1972, when the building was sold to Grace Temple Baptist Church. Eventually the congregation could not keep up with the enormous task of maintaining such a large building, and it was sold to a private owner in May 2015.

Regional Historical Context

Brooklyn Township was the original name given to a separate, incorporated town that extended from Lake Merritt to San Leandro, and from the channel off Alameda to the Contra Costa County line. By 1870, when it was incorporated as a township, Brooklyn had an area of over 24,000 acres and a population of over 1,600. By the time it was incorporated into the city of Oakland, two years later, Brooklyn’s population had grown to nearly 3,000. In comparison, Oakland had a population of 10,500.²⁶ The fine harbor facilities along Brooklyn basin and the extension of local railroad lines into the area led to large-scale industrial expansion and residential development.²⁷

By 1870, Oakland had ten churches. The main pioneer churches were: First Presbyterian Church, organized in April 1853; St. John’s Episcopal Church, founded in 1852; First Baptist Church, dedicated in December 1854; and the first Catholic church, erected in 1853. By 1883, there were nearly forty churches in Oakland.²⁸ By the mid 1890s, around fifty churches existed in Oakland. Six of those were owned by Presbyterians, who had some 2,300 members and represented

²² “The Chronicle’s New Home,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, June 22, 1890, 6.

²³ Mark A. Wilson, *A Living Legacy: Historic Architecture of the East Bay* (San Francisco: Lexikos Publishing Company, 1987), 255.

²⁴ Vina H. Edwards, *The Story of the San Francisco Presbyterial Society, 1883-1933* (Oakland: A. Newman, 1993), 23.

²⁵ Hovagimian, 9-10.

²⁶ Wilson, 249.

²⁷ Lois Rather, *Oakland’s Image: A History of Oakland, California* (Oakland: The Rather Press, 1972), 51-59.

²⁸ Frank Clinton Merritt, *History of Alameda County California: Volume 1, Illustrated* (Chicago: The A.J. Clarke Publishing Company, 1928), 126.

Brooklyn Presbyterian Church
Name of Property

Alameda, California
County and State

investments of about \$145,000.²⁹ Besides their religious function, the churches were social and cultural centers, especially when Oakland was still essentially a frontier town. When the gold rush days were long past, the churches continued to nurture the social needs of the community.

The 1870s also brought a wave of great depression. In 1876, 155,000 people were estimated to have come to the San Francisco Bay area hungry, homeless, and looking for work. Such desperation led to blaming the influx of Chinese people for the tanking economy. Racism was a powerful force, leading to its legitimization for the first time in U.S. history in 1882 with the Chinese Exclusion Act. The need for charity and social reform was substantial by this point. Activity in women's clubs and charitable affairs increased, much of the work having to do with orphans. Competition between Protestant and Catholic churches to aid in these needs was fierce; their outreach meant growth in membership.³⁰

The burgeoning of Brooklyn and the greater city of Oakland shaped the architecture of churches. Congregations experienced overflowing growth, precipitating the replacement of their original and simple pioneer establishments. The evolution into larger buildings often required the donations of local wealthy entrepreneurs. The Peralta brothers, the Pattens, and Moses Chase are some of the better-known benefactors in the Oakland area. Congregational committees were in charge of raising the majority of funds, ensuring the buildings were well constructed, of good location and visibility in the community, and used the finest materials and artistic components.³¹ Architects were employed to design large capacity churches that needed to accommodate different types of programs, spatial plans, and stylistic choices. As a result, an eclectic group of styles—revived from the traditional European churches and altered to suit available American materials and modern congregational needs—were erected at the turn of the twentieth century.

Other than Brooklyn Presbyterian Church, two other churches still stand in the Brooklyn Township area. The first is the 7th Avenue Baptist Church, a large brick church with Neoclassic detailing and Dutch-stepped gables on the tower and nave, originally Lutheran, circa 1900-1905. The second church is St. James Episcopal Church, a modest wooden Gothic Revival building whose adjacent chapter house was the original church building and was moved when the congregation expanded, circa 1860-1861.³²

Criteria Consideration A

Because the building was constructed for the purpose of religious worship and functioned as such for 129 years, the property satisfies Criteria Consideration A. Its eligibility for the National Register of Historic Places is merited by its architecture. The property no longer functions as a church and stays true to the good will philosophy of its previous inhabitants with the intent to serve the community. In an attempt to bring tradition back through art, education, and

²⁹ Merritt, 231-232.

³⁰ Marta Gutman, *A City for Children: Women, Architecture, and the Charitable Landscapes of Oakland, 1850-1950* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2014), 27.

³¹ "Oakland, California, the Athens of America," 82-83.

³² Merritt, 145-46.

Brooklyn Presbyterian Church
Name of Property

Alameda, California
County and State

community, Brooklyn Preserve, a 501c(3) not-for-profit organization, is breathing new life into the building through both restoration and reuse.³³

Conclusion

Brooklyn Presbyterian Church is by far the largest and most conspicuous historical building within the former Brooklyn community, and can be regarded as the community's most enduring symbol. The church's position on a slightly raised knoll is an icon visible for miles—even from Interstate 880. Its historical integrity is intact and the church will be restored to bring even more awareness of its own history and the history of the neighborhood.

³³ "About," Brooklyn Preserve <https://sites.google.com/brooklynpreserve.com/home/about?authuser=0> accessed April 5, 2017.

Brooklyn Presbyterian Church
Name of Property

Alameda, California
County and State

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

Books and Journals

Darling, Sharon.S. *Chicago Ceramics & Glass: An Illustrated History from 1871 to 1933*. Chicago: Chicago Historical Society, 1979.

Edwards, Vina H. *The Story of the San Francisco Presbyterial Society, 1883-1933*. Oakland: A. Newman, 1993.

Grupico, Theresa. *The Dome in Christian and Islamic Sacred Architecture*. Baton Rouge, LA: The Forum on Public Policy, 2011.

Gutman, Marta. *A City for Children: Women, Architecture, and the Charitable Landscapes of Oakland, 1850-1950*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2014.

Hinkel, Edgar J. and William E. McCann. *Oakland 1852-1938: Some Phases of the Social, Political and Economic History of Oakland, California [2 volumes]*. Oakland: Oakland Public Library as a report of Official Project No. 465-03-3-337, conducted under the auspices of the Works Progress Administration, 1939.

Hovagimian, Hovey M. *One Century of Service: A Historical Sketch of Brooklyn Presbyterian, 1861-1961*. Oakland, The Church, Feb. 1961.

Merritt, Frank Clinton. *History of Alameda County California: Volume 1, Illustrated*. Chicago: The A.J. Clarke Publishing Company, 1928.

“Oakland, California, the Athens of America.” *The California Review*, v.1, no.1: October 1893.

Oakland Cultural Heritage Survey: State Historic Resources Inventory. May 1981.

Oakland Public Schools. *Heritage of Oakland*. June, 1968.

Rather, Lois. *Oakland's Image: A History of Oakland, California*. Oakland: The Rather Press, 1972.

Steege, Gwen W. *The Book of Plans and the Earthly Romanesque Revival in the United States: A Study in Architectural Patronage*. Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians, XLVI: September, 1987.

Brooklyn Presbyterian Church
Name of Property

Alameda, California
County and State

Wicher, Edward Arthur. *The Presbyterian Church in California, 1849-1927*. New York: F. H. Hitchcock, 1927.

Wilson, Mark A. *A Living Legacy: Historic Architecture of the East Bay*. San Francisco: Lexikos Publishing Company, 1987.

Whipple, F.M., "Art Glass," *The American Architect and Building News*. Boston: October 2, 1886.

Articles

"A Modern Church: The Splendid New Edifice of the Brooklyn Presbyterians," *Oakland Enquirer, Special Edition*. December 24, 1887.

The Knave, *Oakland Tribune*. Jan. 8, 1961.

The Christian Home. Oakland: First Presbyterian Church, v.2, no. 8: Aug. 1887.

"The Chronicle's New Home," *San Francisco Chronicle*, June 22, 1890.

Websites

"About." *Brooklyn Preserve*. 2017.

<https://sites.google.com/brooklynpreserve.com/home/about?authuser=0>

"Featured Windows, September 2005." Michigan Stained Glass Census, 2005.

<http://www.michiganstainedglass.org/month/month.php?month=09&year=2005>

"Romanesque Revival." *Architectural Styles of America and Europe*. 2012.

<https://architecturestyles.org/romanesque-revival/>

Shah, Amal. "Introduction to Romanesque Architecture." *Slideshare*. 2015.

<https://www.slideshare.net/amalgshah/introduction-to-romanesque-architecture>

Records

City of Oakland Permit # B91450, 10/13/1960.

City of Oakland Permit # C6927, 1/10/63.

City of Oakland Permit # D13461, 1980.

Brooklyn Presbyterian Church
Name of Property

Alameda, California
County and State

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository: Oakland Public Library; Church Archives

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property less than one acre

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1. Latitude: 37.791277

Longitude: -122.247603

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

Brooklyn Presbyterian Church is located on Alameda County Parcel Number 20-140-5. Commencing at a point formed by the intersection of the Southerly line of East Fifteenth Street, formerly called Madison Street, with the Westerly line of Twelfth Avenue, formerly called Polk Street, said point being the Northeasterly corner of Block 62; running thence Southwesterly on the Westerly line of said Twelfth Avenue 150 feet; thence at right angles Northwesterly and parallel with East Fifteenth Street 140 feet; thence at right angles Northeasterly and parallel with Twelfth Avenue 150 feet to the Southerly line of East Fifteenth Street; and thence Southeasterly along the Southerly line of East Fifteenth Street 140 feet to the point of commencement.

Brooklyn Presbyterian Church
Name of Property

Alameda, California
County and State

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The property lines are the original, legally recorded property lines and remain the same.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Fallon Blaser
organization: Owner
street & number: 34864 Perry Road
city or town: Union City state: CA zip code: 94587
e-mail: fallon.blaser@gmail.com
telephone: (919) 602-8314
date: August 2015; Revised April/May 2017

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log

Name of Property: Brooklyn Presbyterian Church
City or Vicinity: Oakland
County: Alameda
State: California
Photographer: Fallon Blaser
Date Photographed: June 17, 2015

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

1 of 11 View of corner from across intersection, camera looking W

Brooklyn Presbyterian Church
Name of Property

Alameda, California
County and State

- 2 of 11 12th Avenue entrance, camera looking NW
- 3 of 11 15th Street entrance, camera looking SW
- 4 of 11 Back of building, camera looking S
- 5 of 11 Back of building, camera looking NE
- 6 of 11 View of the Gallery, camera looking SW
- 7 of 11 View of the Women's Parlor addition on 15th St, camera looking N
- 8 of 11 View of altar and organ in Auditorium, camera looking E
- 9 of 11 View of pew arrangement in Auditorium, camera looking NW
- 10 of 11 View of a classroom, camera looking SW
- 11 of 11 View of Pastor's Study, camera looking SE

Index of Figures

- Figure 1. Location Map
- Figure 2. Site Map
- Figure 3. Sketch Map
- Figure 4. Photo Key
- Figure 5. 1893 photograph of Brooklyn Presbyterian Church obtained from Frank Merritt's *History of Alameda County California: Volume 1, Illustrated*
- Figure 6. Original floor plan obtained from *The Christian Home* archive, August, 1887

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

Brooklyn Presbyterian Church
Name of Property

Alameda, California
County and State

Figure 1. Location Map



Brooklyn Presbyterian Church
Name of Property

Alameda, California
County and State

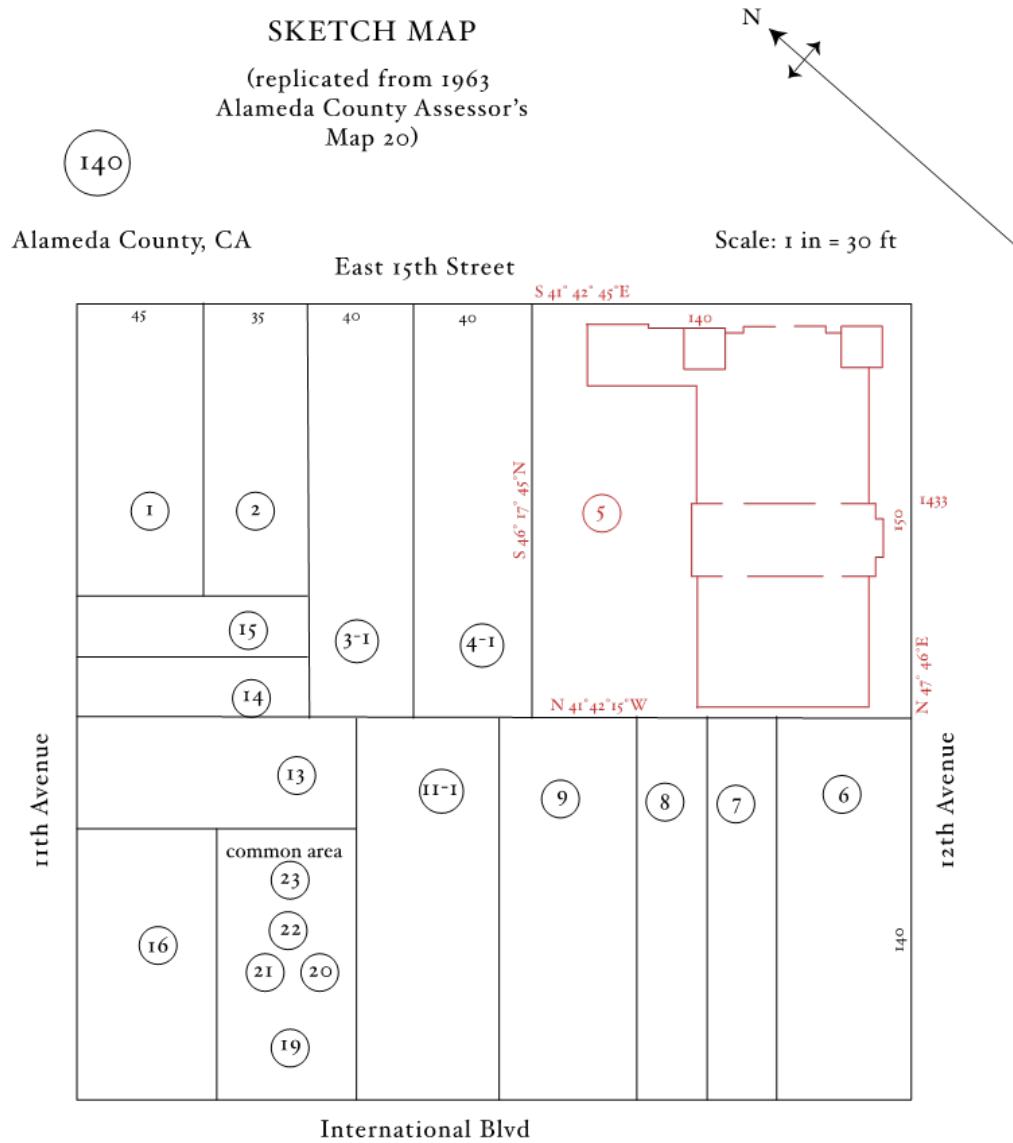
Figure 2. Site Map



Brooklyn Presbyterian Church
Name of Property

Alameda, California
County and State

Figure 3. Sketch Map



Brooklyn Presbyterian Church
Name of Property

Alameda, California
County and State

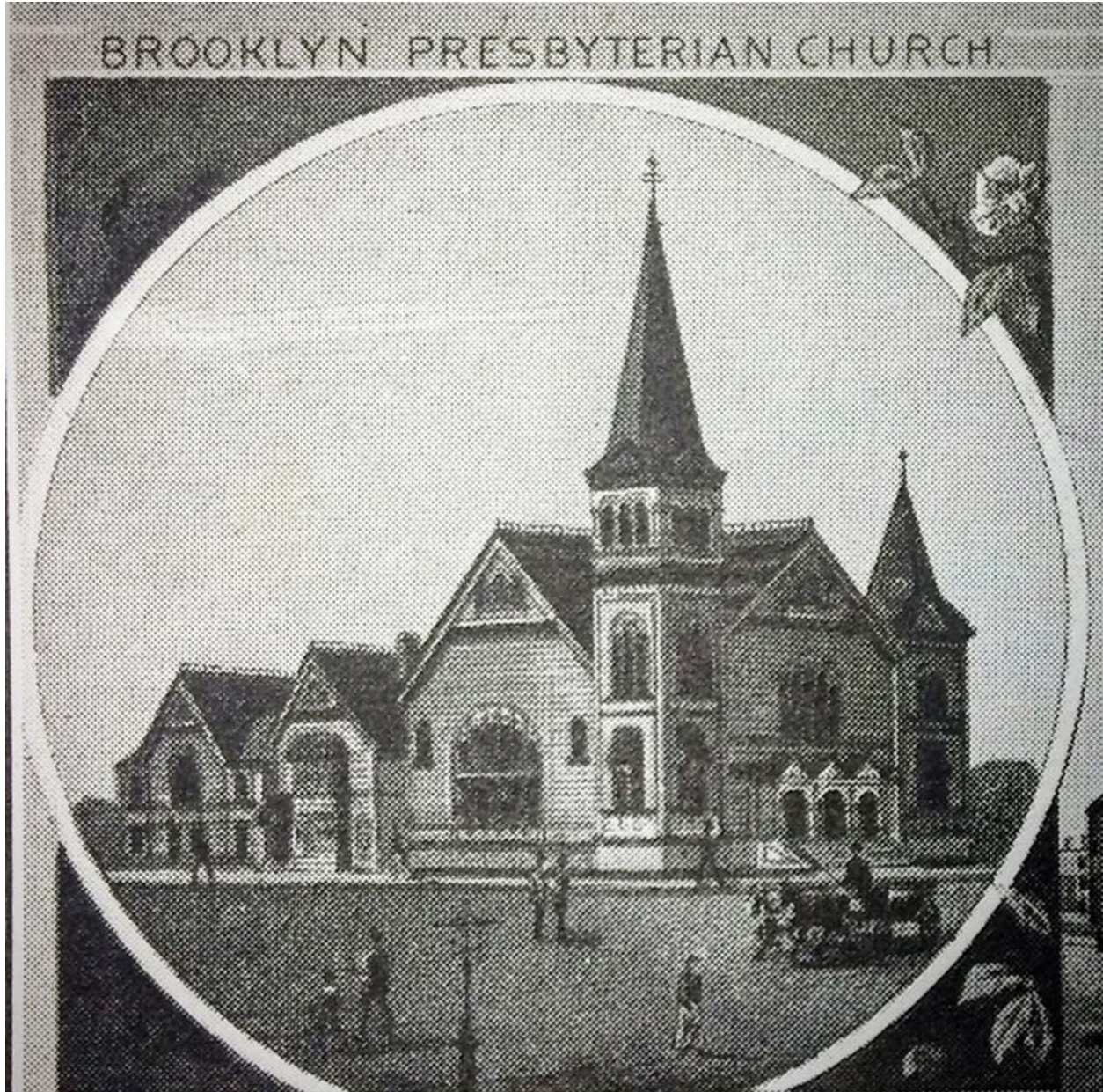
Figure 4. Photo Key



Brooklyn Presbyterian Church
Name of Property

Alameda, California
County and State

Figure 5. 1893 photograph of Brooklyn Presbyterian Church obtained from Frank Merritt's *History of Alameda County California: Volume 1, Illustrated*



Brooklyn Presbyterian Church
Name of Property

Alameda, California
County and State

Figure 6. Original floor plan obtained from *The Christian Home* archive, August, 1887

