

**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.

**DRAFT**

## 1. Name of Property

Historic name: Westminster Presbyterian Church and Cemetery of Tremont

Other names/site number: Tremont Church and Cemetery

Name of related multiple property listing:

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

## 2. Location

Street & number: 8290 Tremont Road

City or town: Dixon State: California County: Solano

Not For Publication:  Vicinity: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>_____ <b>Signature of certifying official/Title:</b></p>	<p>_____ <b>Date</b></p>
<p>_____ <b>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</b></p>	

<p>In my opinion, the property <u>meets</u> <u>does not meet</u> the National Register criteria.</p>	
<p>_____ <b>Signature of commenting official:</b></p>	<p>_____ <b>Date</b></p>
<p>_____ <b>Title :</b> <span style="float: right;"><b>State or Federal agency/bureau</b></span> <b>or Tribal Government</b></p>	

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#### 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:) \_\_\_\_\_

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Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

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#### 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

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**Number of Resources within Property**

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

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

FUNERARY/cemetery

\_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

RELIGION/religious facility

FUNERARY/cemetery

\_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

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## 7. Description

### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

MID-19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY/Greek Revival

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**Materials:** (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: Wood: Douglas fir framing, redwood siding

### 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.)

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### Summary Paragraph

The Westminster Presbyterian Church of Tremont, also known as Tremont Church, with an adjoining cemetery is located on two acres of dry, flat land on the south side of Tremont Road in northern Solano County. The tall one-story church building, constructed in 1871, measures 28'5" wide by 46'4" long. Architecturally, the church is characteristically Greek Revival in several respects: neoclassical proportions of length to width, a broad pediment above the entrance, characteristic Greek Revival moulding around the windows and doors, and a belfry centered over the entrance. The building features two tall windows at the façade, three on either side elevation, and no windows to the rear. The cemetery is located on the same parcel as the church, situated behind (south of) the church building. Minor modifications to the church include construction of a pair of secondary doors just inside the original door, and construction of a balcony, both prior to 1929. A raised foundation was installed in 2014, to replace the original mudsill foundation. The church building and cemetery retain a high degree of integrity. A singlewide trailer installed circa 1989 for a resident caretaker is a noncontributing resource.

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## Narrative Description

### Location and Setting

The Westminster Presbyterian Church and Cemetery are located on a two-acre parcel on Tremont Road in rural Solano County. The immediate setting is that of open agricultural fields in all directions, although the parcel is only about five miles from the Yolo County city of Davis and about eight miles from the Solano County city of Dixon. The tall trees on the church/cemetery parcel—palms, cypress, pines and miscellaneous deciduous trees—are the only trees to be seen for long distances in this farmland.

The parcel is twice as deep as it is wide—it measures 220' along Tremont Road and extends 428.5' to the south. The church building is centered on the parcel and about 50' south of Tremont Road. A small trailer is just to the west of the church. A 4' tall chain link fence extends along the front (north edge) of the parcel. This fence replaced an older cyclone fence in 2016. The cemetery occupies all of the parcel to the south of the church building, or about one and one-half acres. The parcel includes dozens of very mature trees, with older deciduous trees ringing all four sides of the parcel as well as pines, Italian cypress, and a single palm. See **Figure 1** for site plan. **Photograph 1** illustrates the landscaping around the church. **Photograph 2** illustrates the setting for the cemetery.

### Church Building

The church building measures 28'5" wide and 46'4" long. It is 25' tall to the ridgeline, and about 32' to the top of the belfry. The building was constructed with solid redwood beams for the exterior with some of the lumber in direct contact with the ground found to be still intact during the 2014 restoration. The only door (3'6" x 9'3") opened into one room with a high ceiling and eight double-hung windows provided light and ventilation. Two windows were placed on either side of the front door and three were on each side of the large room. Each upper and lower sash measures 3'4" wide x 5'4" tall and has nine individual panes. All windows have full outside 3'4" x 10'8" shutters for protection, which are opened only when an event is taking place. The church is capped by a belfry that might have identified the building as a church in early days as documented in the church photo taken in 1910 (**Figure 3**). No sign of an opening through the roof up into the belfry indicates there may have never been a bell.

The church building was supported by 6" x 6" Douglas fir perimeter sills with pegged mortise and tenon joints on 4" x 6" posts, elevated 2'6" above ground level. These were set on doubled redwood 2" x 12" beams directly on the soil. The attached front porch was 12' wide x 7'5" deep with five wide steps extending down another 7' to the front walk. The perimeter redwood foundation was later replaced with concrete piers and posts in the 1920s. The wall framing was typical for the time (2" x 6" rough Douglas fir set 16" on centers), known as "balloon framed" where studs are side-nailed to the floor joists and toe-nailed to the 6" x 6" sills. This results in continuous stud bays from the crawl space to the attic. The roof and ceiling framing comprises site-built trusses with Douglas fir 2" x 6" main members and 1" x 12" web members. The bottom chords of the trusses were single piece 2" x 6" x 30' long. All nails were cut square nails typical

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of the time. The siding of 1" x 8" shiplap redwood covered the whole building from ground to roof. Cedar shingles covered the church roof as well as that of the belfry centered over the entry door. The belfry measures 8' x 8' x 10' high.

### *Façade*

The façade of the church is shown in **Photograph 3**. The façade is dominated by the two most character-defining elements of this Greek Revival church: the broad pediment centered over the central entryway and the belfry. Also clearly visible at the façade is the characteristically Greek Revival moulding, show in detail in **Photograph 4**. This moulding, with its distinctive cornice and flared pattern below the cornice, is present at all openings (doors and windows) on the exterior as well as the interior of the building.

### *East and West Side Elevations*

The two side elevations are identical in every respect. Each includes three of the tall nine-over-nine double hung windows, each surrounded by Greek Revival moulding. The building foundation originally comprised wooden mudsills; these were replaced with a raised concrete block foundation in 2014. The foundation is hidden behind a timber board and batten skirt. **Photograph 5** shows the west elevation.

### *Rear Elevation*

The rear of the building shelters the altar and includes no windows or doors. **Photograph 6** shows the rear elevation. That view is hidden behind a very old tree and a small shed and portable toilet. The portable toilet was brought to this site in 1990 and the shed in 2007.

### *Church Interior*

As constructed, the building contained only one door, centered on the façade. That door is still in place, as shown in **Photograph 3**. At some point not long after 1871, an inner wall was built about 8' inside the entry. The new wall has two doors leading to the two aisles of the sanctuary. At that time, a balcony was built along the north wall. It appears this balcony was designed to tie together the two sidewalls and was never intended to offer additional seating or to serve as a choir balcony. The two interior doorways and the balcony are shown in **Photograph 7**.

Structural support for the 28' partition across the room was provided by slanting beams from above the tall windows across the entry down to the 8' height of the wall. The slanted ceiling became the floor of a balcony with a curved stairway leading up on the right side of the entry way. Although the balcony did not provide more seating because of the slanted floor, items have been discarded there over the years, including the remnants of the vandalized light fixture.

In the seating area of the large room, the pews faced south toward the platform at the south end of the building. In the center are seven 12'1½" pews plus one 10'7" pew at the rear. Ten 5'2" smaller pews are on each side along the outside walls and two 5'2" pews are placed horizontally along both sides of the platform. The arrangement of the pews as well as the altar are shown in **Photograph 8**, taken from the balcony. **Photograph 9** is a detail of the altar, original to the 1871 construction.

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When the church was first constructed, the only door opened into one huge room that included a pot-bellied wood stove for heat. In addition to the stove, on display in the entry area, still visible is a brick chimney on the inside of the east wall 8' from the front of the building. A stovepipe connected the stove with the chimney where it began at the lower end about 10' above the tall windows. The chimney extended through the roof above the east wall for roughly 8' feet as judging from drawings of the church before the outside chimney was removed. The large room was flanked on each side with the three tall windows for sunlight and ventilation. Two oil-fed 4-lamp chandeliers provided ceiling lighting. One of these, later electrified, is still in place, the other was lost to vandalism. Pews faced the solid wall at the south end of the building where a raised 7'10" wide x 6' deep x 1'5" high platform was built for a movable pulpit, still in use. Tremont Mite Society records list the name of the local farmer who made and donated the podium at the time of the dedication ceremony. When construction was completed, the dedication ceremony for the Westminster Presbyterian Church of Tremont took place in 1871.

### **Alterations to the Church Building**

In 2014, the Silveyville Cemetery District completed a major repair project to provide essential structural support and seismic bracing for the building. Components included 20" x 20" concrete piers with 4" x 6" treated wood posts, with the addition of tie-downs, bracing, and crawl space ventilation. The pony wall—the lower wall between foundation and sill—was shear-plied and sided with fiber cement board-and-batten siding to mimic the original, which provided more complete moisture protection and the seismic bracing while retaining the original appearance. Also included in the renovation were glass replacement, restoration of the bare wood floor, and a complete paint job including the front porch and steps. Efforts have been made to restore the Westminster Presbyterian Church of Tremont to its original appearance when dedicated in 1871.

### **Description of the Cemetery**

The Tremont Cemetery occupies about one and one-half acres south of the church building. The cemetery plots are arranged in a grid, as shown in **Figure 2**. The types of markers, which date from the 1870s into the twenty-first century, are so varied that the arrangement does not seem to be nearly so grid-like. The dozens of very old trees in the cemetery are generally arranged in a grid pattern. The variety of types of trees tends to give the cemetery a more organic design than is reflected in the grid. **Photograph 10** shows some of the burial sites and mature trees in the cemetery.

### **Noncontributing Resource**

A singlewide trailer/mobile home installed circa 1989 for a resident caretaker is shown in **Photograph 11**. Due to their moveable nature, the small shed and portable toilet are not counted as resources.

### **Integrity**

The Westminster Presbyterian Church and Cemetery retains a very high degree of integrity. The church is in its original *location* and *setting* in relation to the cemetery. The church has shared the immediate setting with the cemetery since the church was built. The remainder of the

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setting—vast farmland in all directions and the Tremont Road access—are nearly identical to what one would have seen in 1871, other than the paved country road. The setting for the church is diminished slightly through post-1929 installation of front fence, security trailer, storage shed, and portable toilet. Each of these is necessary for the security of the property and comfort of visitors. Seen in the scale of this nearly two-acre parcel, these small utility buildings and structures are not significant detractions to the property's setting.

The integrity of *design, materials, and workmanship* are quite high. The post-1929 changes to the church building, restricted to installation of a concrete foundation and seismic bracing tying the building to the foundation, do nothing to diminish the integrity of design. All character-defining features that speak to the Greek Revival design are in place. Although the 2014 foundation adds new material and a different type of workmanship, it does not affect the character-defining features of the church or its Greek Revival design.

Integrity of *feeling and association* are also quite high. The feeling of this rural church is preserved almost intact. It was an isolated country church when it was built, and it continues to present that same feeling. Its isolation has become more pronounced than it was in the early twentieth century, when there were more single-family homes in the vicinity. The integrity of association is intact through the continued role of the Tremont Mite Society in managing the property. The Mite Society built the church and members continue to care for it.

Integrity of *design, material, and workmanship* are more difficult to gauge with regard to the cemetery. The plan for burial plots follows the original design. It appears that most of the material and workmanship for grave markers is intact. The integrity of *feeling and association* are intact for the same reasons they are intact for the church building. This church with adjacent cemetery is a classic rural property type. The isolated rural setting has the same feeling as it had throughout the years, made more impressive by the large stands of landmark trees. The integrity of association is maintained by the continued role of the Tremont Mite Society, whose members built the church and help maintain it.



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## 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

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**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT

ARCHITECTURE

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance**

1871-1929

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Dates**

1871

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Architect/Builder**

Unknown

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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**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.)

Westminster Presbyterian Church and Cemetery of Tremont is eligible for the National Register at the local level of significance under Criterion A in the area of Exploration/Settlement for its association with the pioneer history of eastern Solano County, and under Criterion C in the area of Architecture as a building that embodies the distinctive characteristics of the Greek Revival style as applied to a modest community church. The building is a rare, surviving example of volunteer-built nineteenth century churches in California's central valley. The period of significance is 1871 to 1929, from construction until the church was sold following years of little activity. As a property that derives its significance from architectural distinction as evaluated under Criterion C, the building satisfies Criteria Consideration A: Religious Properties. Where the church is the main resource nominated, the associated cemetery does not need to meet Criteria Consideration D: Cemeteries.

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

### **Exploration/Settlement**

The church and cemetery are all that remain of the small settlement called Tremont in rural Solano County. The desire for a place of worship brought pioneer immigrants together as they settled their families in the frontier of Solano County. The first religious congregation in northern Solano County was organized in 1861 in a town called Silveyville, which was a 10-mile horse and buggy ride for settlers living in the Tremont Township. In 1863, women in the Tremont area organized the Tremont Mite Society to build a church closer to home, and began fund raising.<sup>1</sup>

With sufficient funds, church construction began with mostly volunteer labor from the local farmers. The simple white frame building was finished in 1871 and was dedicated as the Westminster Presbyterian Church of Tremont. Until the early 1900s, the Westminster Presbyterian Church, often called the Tremont Church, provided a social life for the remote farm families. When activity diminished, the church was sold to the Silveyville Cemetery District in 1929. Fifty years later, insurance money restored the building and the Tremont Church is used for special events. The Silveyville Cemetery District is providing excellent care and the Tremont Mite Society members continue to help their church whenever the opportunity arises. The Westminster Presbyterian Church of Tremont stands proudly today, a reminder of the past where descendants and friends still gather to reminisce and celebrate the heritage passed on by early ancestors.

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<sup>1</sup> "Mite" is a biblical reference to a story told in the Gospels of Mark and Luke, in which a poor woman gives to the temple all she had, two small coins, called "mites" in the King James Bible. The women of Tremont called themselves mites to reflect their modest means and generosity.

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At the time of the gold rush in California, many new arrivals to the region initially came seeking gold. Other world events changed this settlement pattern. A devastating potato famine from 1846 to 1852 caused one million immigrants to flee from Ireland; this was followed by a series of Prussian/German wars in the 1860s that contributed to many more choosing to leave Europe and settle in the New World. While the American Civil War was underway in eastern states, President Abraham Lincoln signed the Homestead Act in 1862, which offered significant incentives for thousands of pioneers to head west. Solano County changed radically with the influx of the gold seekers by immediately becoming the primary route to the gold country between San Francisco and Sutter's Fort. Whether traveling overland or inland by water, many travelers never forgot viewing the land of Solano and returned either because they failed to find gold or, having found it, wanted to start their own homesteads.

For the early settlers, Solano County provided extensive grazing ranges for cattle. By 1852, sheep also had been introduced on the rangeland. Farming changed from rangeland to wheat with the first major wheat crop in 1855 and soon wheat, barley, and oats were growing on the fertile flat lands in much of Solano County. By 1855, the northeastern part of Solano County was organized into the Tremont Township. Instead of the vast land grants, smaller sections were then set aside near the coming railroad through the Tremont area and throughout the Township.

By this time, most immigrants to Tremont Township were farm people. The Tremont area was settled by a mixed population, recorded as coming from many places including Prussia, Germany, Ireland, England, Scotland, Canada, the New England states, and other eastern and Midwest states, especially Wisconsin and Iowa. The largest group who came from abroad were of German descent and nearby roads carry the names of some of the early German families including Becker, Dietrich, Eggert, Hahn, Hamel, Rohwer, Runge, Stick, and Timm. In the 1860 census, 83 farmers were listed in the Tremont Township. Seven farm families grew wheat, several grew market gardens, and about half operated dairy farms as well as some scattering of sheep and cattle herds. A proper town never developed within the township. Three public buildings were located at the intersection of Tremont and Eggert Roads. A building called Solano House housed the combination post office and store, and served as a one-room school upstairs until a separate building for the Solano School was built. A community-gathering place called Tremont Hall was located next to the school. Most of the Tremont area farms were self-sufficient with Davisville providing a trading area for farmers to barter their produce. The one necessity missing was a church. The post office closed in 1896, the school lasted until the early 1900s, and Tremont Hall survived until it burned in the 1970s.

Residents of the Tremont area were able to find some social and cultural interaction with settlers in Silveyville, a small community that was about 10 miles from Tremont.<sup>2</sup> Since many of the settlers in the Tremont area had arrived with complete families, locating a place of worship was very important. The first religious congregation in the area organized in 1861 in Silveyville, and worshippers from the Tremont area had a long ten-mile buggy ride to join that group. Members of the group meeting in the sitting room of Mr. Elijah S. Silvey's Hotel on the first Sabbath of

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<sup>2</sup> Almost nothing remains of Silveyville.

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June 1861 were Mr. and Mrs. Samuel McBride and John and Mary Cloutman of Tremont. The group approved organizing a Presbyterian Church under the care of the Presbytery of Benicia, and it was resolved to give the future church the name of Westminster. A Reverend A. Fairbairn participated in the discussions and conducted the services during these early years. During this time, a Methodist-Episcopal congregation was also meeting in Silveyville homes and later would build their own church in 1866.

In 1863, the women living on ranches and in other homes around the Tremont area had become inspired to build a church and organized the Tremont Mite Society to build a house of worship closer to home. The mite for the original Society members was for the various families to contribute fifty cents each from time to time to donate to a building fund.<sup>3</sup>

The Tremont congregation continued to meet in Silveyville, and although early records from 1861 to 1865 were lost in a fire, the restored minutes indicate that a church had been built in Silveyville during this time. The minutes showed it was used jointly by the Baptists and the Presbyterians and was identified as the Westminster Church. The records of the church in 1865 mentioned that membership of the Westminster Church (then six) included Mrs. Jane Hyde and Mrs. Mary Cloutman of Tremont. In 1866, the Westminster Church minutes state that Mr. John Cloutman, Mrs. Miriah Sikes, and her children Frank Wire and Arazona Sikes were baptized. After 1866, Tremont area residents no longer traveled to Silveyville, using instead the local Tremont Hall as a place of worship, eventually selling their half of the church in Silveyville to help build their own church.

When the Tremont Mite Society members started raising funds, they also needed some land in the Tremont area for the new church and cemetery. It was fortunate that Cornelia Jane Hyde and husband Septa Filmore Hyde had moved from New York to California in 1852 and settled in the Tremont area in 1855. Cornelia Jane Hyde was a charter member of the Tremont Mite Society. Septa Filmore Hyde and his wife generously donated two acres of their land for the church and cemetery, near the east end of Tremont Road. With continued optimism, these Tremont Mite Society women worked to accumulate the needed amount of money to build a church. Everybody pitched in to give their mite and often one or another of the men would donate the goodly sum of five or ten dollars. The fund raising included selling the Presbyterian half of the Silveyville church to the Baptists for \$700 in the late 1860s and when \$600 was added from donations the church construction could begin.

In 1868, a major event was taking place in northern Solano County. When the California Pacific Railroad was completed from Oakland to Sacramento the chosen route passed through the county three miles south of Silveyville. Immediately seeing the probability of a good place to build a town, W. R. Ferguson purchased an acre of land from Thomas Dickson and built the first house. The town was named in honor of Mr. Dickson who donated ten acres for a depot and town site. The spelling was changed when the first consignment of goods came addressed to W. R. Ferguson, Dixon. Most of the residents of Silveyville chose to relocate to Dixon. In addition

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<sup>3</sup> Fifty cents at that time was the rough equivalent of \$25.00 in 2017.

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to homes, the 1866 Methodist-Episcopal church was moved by rolling on logs to stand beside the train tracks in downtown Dixon. As a result of the exodus from Silveyville the town was abandoned and the Baptist church was not mentioned again. If the Tremont area residents had not been meeting at Tremont Hall while planning to build their own church, it would have been many miles to find another place of worship.

In the records of a congregation meeting in 1869 at the Tremont Hall, a Board of Trustees was elected to erect a house of worship. Trustees appointed to direct the building of the church included William H. Marden and Justice of the Peace John F. Cloutman. When construction began on the Tremont Church much of the actual labor for the simple white frame building was volunteer. Materials were brought by barge to Maine Prairie, a seagoing port south of Dixon, and then overland by wagon to Tremont. The pulpit was made by William Y. Gordon who, with his brother, was also responsible for most of the inside woodwork. Some items of furniture for the church were bought, some were hand-constructed and others were donated by the Hales and Breuners stores in Sacramento. Major shopping and business matters were conducted in Davisville or Sacramento, the latter usually requiring an overnight trip.

As discussed in the context of Architecture, a baffling aspect of the recorded history of this church is the absence of the name of the architect. The architectural sophistication of the building strongly suggests that an architect designed it or that it was built on plans from a pattern book. Careful research into church and other records, however, did not reveal the identity of the designer.

The church was dedicated May 28, 1871 as the Westminster Church, a Presbyterian Church. It is recorded that Helen Grieve was organist, Mrs. McBride sang alto, Lottie Dietrich contralto, Mr. Watkins bass and Septa Hyde tenor. Cornelia Hyde also sang in the choir, joined by William Gordon and Amanda Stick. Initially church services were conducted by traveling pastors and eventually Reverend Fairbairn became the Tremont Church's first regular minister. The first wedding held in the church took place in 1873. At the time of the dedication, the church debt was not fully paid so the Tremont Mite Society accepted responsibility for all expenses relating to the church and grounds, which included making payments on a building loan mortgage from the National Board of Missions of the Presbyterian Church. The members continued to meet for another purpose also, to continue caring for each other among the many remote rural families. Raising children on isolated farms in the 1800s was a challenge and a monthly meeting brought them all together.

Because the land donated by Hyde was a large two-acre parcel, it was possible for the Tremont Mite Society to incorporate a cemetery into the plans for the parcel. When established, the Tremont cemetery was laid out with a wide path between four large sections on each side divided into ten 16' x 20' plots, large enough to hold eight caskets, for individual owners. Trees were planted throughout the cemetery as well as along the outside fence line and complement the historic appearance with the many unique markers. The earliest recorded burial is for a Levi Reid, who died on 8/17/1861. The next burial was Obadiah W. Judd who died on 2/23/1865. Both of these men have descendants who have continued their membership in the Tremont Mite

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Society and attend the biennial socials whenever possible. In the center of the cemetery are five plain redwood planks marking unknown graves from over a century ago. Despite efforts to research early records, these graves remain unknown.

Many early families have plots with large decorated monuments. Most monuments were made of concrete while some are marble. For burials beginning in the late twentieth century, bronze and granite markers have been used for burials. Although some of the gravestones have become damaged over the years, they represent challenging lives of pioneering ancestors. Noted especially are simple stones marking the loss of babies, children, and young wives. The primary craftsmen of the church, William Y. Gordon and his family, have large monuments for family members, including a separate marker for a brother-in-law who apparently came west from Vermont to help on the farm and died young at 19. Family plots with many generations continue to add more relatives. Thelma Dietrich was interred in 2016 at age 104 next to her Becker grandparents, who were born in Germany in 1826 and 1841 and buried in the Tremont cemetery in 1906 and 1911 along with her parents years later. Another burial occurred in the Watkins plot, the family having settled locally in 1881, when fourth generation Chris Watkins, still living on the family homestead, lost his wife. Chris' grandmother and aunt were devoted members of the Tremont Mite Society and both served many years as president.

Many of the original residents of the Tremont Township, active in building the church and members of the Tremont Mite Society, are buried in this cemetery, a tradition that continues. The Tremont cemetery is a historical tribute to the families who worked so hard to come to this land, to survive and raise their families here, determined to carry on their religious beliefs in their own church and leave their mark. As seen from across the flat agricultural landscape one views the cluster of huge old trees surrounding the cemetery and is grateful to be reminded of those who came before.

#### *Closure of the church in 1929*

Until the 1900s, the Tremont Church was well used. Some of the families scattered to Davisville or Dixon where their children were attending school. The last regular services at the Tremont Church were conducted in 1912.<sup>4</sup> By 1929, it had become too difficult for the Tremont Mite Society women to continue their financial commitment to the church. At a meeting on November 20, 1929, the Directors of the Presbytery of Sacramento stated the "former Westminster Church... has long since ceased to function..." and still owed a mortgage to the National Board of Missions of the Presbyterian Church. Since the newly established Silveyville Cemetery District paid the \$150 debt, the Presbytery of Sacramento deeded the two acres on Tremont Road with the Westminster Presbyterian Church and Cemetery of Tremont to the Silveyville Cemetery District in Dixon.

Although the church was under new ownership, the Tremont Mite Society members continued to use and care for it as their own. During the following years, the Silveyville Cemetery District maintained the property and left the upkeep of the church to the ladies. Efforts were made to

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<sup>4</sup> A Tremont Mite Society member, born in 1911, remembered attending Sunday School in the Tremont Church, which would have been a few years later.

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keep the church in order by rehangng wallpaper and/or curtains, laying linoleum, putting in new windowpanes, and varnishing all the wood for special occasions. It was not until the mid-1970s when renovation of the interior of the church could take place with insurance monies donated by local farmers received from the loss of the Tremont Hall in a fire. Since that time, local families have enjoyed using the restored church for occasional meetings, special occasions and celebrations, as well as weddings and funerals. The Tremont Mite Society continues to be grateful that the Silveyville Cemetery District provides excellent care to preserve the church building and cemetery and most importantly, they also recognize the vested interest of the members of the Tremont Mite Society. The District and Society continue to work together on special projects for mutual benefit.

The Tremont Mite Society hosted several special events through the years:

- 1) in 1953, 200 persons gathered when a bronze tablet stating “IN HONOR OF THEIR PIONEER MEMBERS WHO JOINED HANDS & HEARTS JUNE 25, 1863 TO AID IN BUILDING THIS CHURCH” was placed below the Westminster Presbyterian Church of Tremont plaque dedicated on May 28, 1871;
- 2) in 1963, a social was held to celebrate the centennial year of the Tremont Mite Society with 165 people in attendance;
- 3) on April 25, 1971, 260 people gathered to celebrate the Tremont Church’s centennial dedicated a bronze tablet “. . . TO COMMEMORATE THE CENTENNIAL OF WESTMINSTER PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH;” and
- 4) on April 29, 1979, 235 descendants attended a celebration for the renovation of the Tremont Church.

In the years after 1979, it became a tradition for the members of the Tremont Mite Society to host biennial socials in odd-numbered years. These gatherings have been very well attended by friends, neighbors and descendants and the following special occasions have been recognized:

- 1) in 2003, the Tremont Mite Society was honored by the California Assembly on its 140<sup>th</sup> anniversary as one of the oldest women’s organizations still active in California; and
- 2) in 2013, the social celebrated the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Tremont Mite Society with descendants in attendance who dated back to the charter members in 1863.

At the social on April 26, 2015, a Certificate of Excellence was presented to the Tremont Mite Society by John M. Vasquez, representing District 4 on the Solano County Board of Supervisors. The members are honored by the following words on the plaque: ***“Believed to be the longest continuously chartered women’s organization in the State of California, the society takes great pride in their heritage and continues to share with the community the history of Tremont.”*** All who are associated with the Tremont Church and cemetery greatly appreciate the support to preserve this very special church throughout the years since its dedication. The Westminster Presbyterian Church of Tremont stands as a solitary beacon of the past and remains relevant and meaningful in the present.



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Although the Silveyville Cemetery District has owned the property since 1929, the Tremont Mite Society is still involved with the church and cemetery. Membership is restricted to women who are descendants of the early families who first settled the farmland in the Tremont Township and/or are relatives of previous residents of this area who are buried in the Tremont cemetery. The Tremont Mite Society is grateful to the Silveyville Cemetery District for maintaining and preserving the Tremont Cemetery with its excellent care throughout these many years while also recognizing Tremont Mite Society members for continuing their role in establishing and maintaining the Tremont church and cemetery.

### **Architecture**

Two major studies help establish a context for evaluating the significance of this 1871 church building. The first is Jeffery Howe, *Houses of Worship: An Identification Guide to the History and Style of American Religious Architecture*, a study of ecclesiastical architecture written by a Boston College professor of architecture.<sup>5</sup> The second is Bette R. Millis and Jeanne Mord, *Sentinels of Love: Rural Churches of California*, a study of historic churches in rural California.<sup>6</sup>

Howe contends that the Greek Revival was exceptionally popular in church design from the early nineteenth century through the decades just after the Civil War. That popularity may be attributed in part to the fact that the style could be adapted to any budget, from grand cathedrals in large cities to small country churches like the Westminster edifice. He writes, "One of the fascinating aspects of the Greek Revival is the way it could be adapted to all level of building, from the highest style to the folk level."<sup>7</sup>

A frustrating aspect of research into this church is the fact that available records do not identify the architect of the building. While it is possible the farmers of Tremont Township were able to recreate a Greek Revival church from memory of other buildings, it is far more likely this sophisticated design was drafted by a trained architect, specifically an architect that specialized in church design, as was a common practice in nineteenth century California. If in the future the architect has been identified, this nomination may be amended to include that information.<sup>8</sup>

While it is disappointing the minutes of the Tremont Mites do not reveal the name of the architect, that fact may suggest that there was not an architect. Instead, it is quite possible that plans for this building were derived from common plans available in book form or for a single purchase through plans distributors. The use of common plans for small country churches was discussed by the well-known early twentieth century architectural historian, Ralph Adams Cram

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<sup>5</sup> Jeffery Howe, *Houses of Worship: An Identification Guide to the History and Style of American Religious Architecture* (San Diego: Thunder Bay Press, 2003).

<sup>6</sup> Bette R. Millis and Jeanne Mord, *Sentinels of Love: Rural Churches of California* (Santa Barbara: Fithian Press, 1990).

<sup>7</sup> Howe, 184.

<sup>8</sup> The records of the Tremont Mites were inspected for this purpose. Also inspected was a general history of the Presbyterian Church in California: James Woods, *California Pioneer Decade of the Presbyterian Church* (The Hudson Company, San Francisco, 1922), 84. Woods mentions the church, noting: "There is a house of worship built in 1872 which will accommodate 250 people. There is a well arranged cemetery in the rear in good order; the church grounds contain two acres.

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in his 1901 book, *Church Building: A Study of the Principles of Architecture in Their relation to the Church*.<sup>9</sup> Cram included an entire chapter on the design of the small “country chapel.” Cram looked with disdain upon the use of pattern book plans, calling the finished products “almost without exception horrible to the extreme.”<sup>10</sup> Despite Cram’s misgivings, pattern books were as commonly used for small churches as for homes. The most famous early pattern books were written by Cram’s fellow Bostonian, Asher Benjamin, who was especially fond of Greek Revival design for Protestant churches.<sup>11</sup>

Another aspect of significance for this church is its early date of construction among rural churches in California. In their study of rural churches, Millis and Mord conduct an extensive inventory of extant historic churches in rural California. They document and discuss 135 historic rural churches in California. While this cannot be seen as a definitive list of older rural churches, it certainly provides a useful context for this property type. These 135 churches are distributed throughout the state, with 72 in Northern California (as far south as Solano County), 35 in Central California (from San Joaquin County to Kern County) and 30 in Southern California (south of the Tehachapi Mountains).

Among the 72 churches in the northern counties, 21 were built in the 1850s, 1860s, or 1870s. Of these, 11 are as old as the church in Tremont. Churches are listed in alphabetical order by county.

St. Mary’s Catholic Church, Nicasio, Marin County, 1867, Greek Revival  
Church of the Assumption Catholic Church, Tomales, Marin County, 1860, Gothic Revival  
Tomales Presbyterian Church, Tomales, Marin County, 1869, Greek Revival  
Round Valley Methodist Church, Mendocino County, 1869, Greek Revival  
North San Juan Methodist Church, Nevada County, 1856, Greek Revival  
Dutch Flat Methodist Church, Placer County, 1861, Greek Revival  
Pioneer Church, Gold Run, Placer County, 1871  
Immaculate Conception Catholic Church, Downieville, Sierra County, 1858, Greek Revival  
Downieville Methodist Church, Sierra County, 1858, Greek Revival  
St. Joseph’s Catholic Church, Sawyer’s Bar, Siskiyou County, 1855  
Immaculate Conception Catholic Church, Smartville, Yuba County, 1870, Greek Revival

This list of very old rural churches in Northern California shows two things. First, it is not a large number: Westminster appears to be among the twelve oldest extant rural churches in the northern counties. Second, it illustrates a point made by Howe, that the Greek Revival style was well-suited to humble rural church buildings.

Among this group, the Westminster church is a particularly important example of a rural Greek Revival building. It illustrates the characteristics that best define the style. Its proportions are

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<sup>9</sup> Ralph Adams Cram, *Church Building: A Study of the Principles of Architecture in Their relation to the Church* (Boston: George H. Ellis, 1901).

<sup>10</sup> Cram, 14.

<sup>11</sup> Asher Benjamin, *The American Builder’s Companion: Or, A System of Architecture, Particularly Adapted to the Present Style of Building*, 1827 (Reprint, Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 1969).

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visually reflective of the temple shapes from which the Greek Revival style was derived. In fact, the ratio of width to length at the Westminster building is nearly equal to the Golden ratio that many believe was used to establish pleasing proportions in Greek temples. It also includes a pediment, reflecting the Greek temple origins of the style, as well as a belfry. The window and door mouldings are also characteristic of those used in residences as well as commercial and community buildings in the Greek Revival style. Although a modest building, the Westminster Presbyterian Church of Tremont is an excellent example of this type, period, and method of construction.

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## 9. Major Bibliographical References

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

Benjamin, Asher. *The American Builder's Companion: Or, A System of Architecture, Particularly Adapted to the Present Style of Building*. 1827. Reprint, Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 1969.

Cram, Ralph Adams. *Church Building: A Study of the Principles of Architecture in Their relation to the Church*. Boston: George H. Ellis, 1901.

Howe, Jeffery. *Houses of Worship: An Identification Guide to the History and Style of American Religious Architecture*. San Diego: Thunder Bay Press, 2003.

Millis, Bette R. and Jeanne Mord. *Sentinels of Love: Rural Churches of California*. Santa Barbara: Fithian Press, 1990.

### Primary Records

Bound volume of Tremont Mite Society: Delta Microfilm Service of Sacramento on 7/28/83 copied records and minutes for the following items:

- 1) "Westminster Presbyterian Church of Tremont"—years 1861 through 1897.
- 2) "Ladies Mite Society of Tremont"—years 1875 through 1983.

Brothers, Mark, Building Contractor: completed Tremont Church restoration.

"Certificate of Excellence," a plaque presented by John M. Vasquez at social on 4/26/15.

Collection compiled by Emily Rowe, Tremont Mite Society Historian:

- 1) Interviews with elderly members.
- 2) "Tremont Church" and "Families..." scrapbooks assembled in 1994.
- 3) News articles, publicity, and information printed in programs for socials.

"Historical Articles of Solano County Online Database" Kristin Delaplane, author of *Echoes of Solano's Past* with Tremont story published 9/10/95 in *Vacaville Reporter*.

"Historical Background—Tremont Mite Society" submitted to Lois Wolk for Assembly Resolution presented at social on 5/4/03 recognizing 140<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

"Index To Property Owners and Township Lists: Historical Atlas Map of Solano County, California, 1878" located in the Dixon Library, Archive Section.

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“Ninth United States Census—1870” in the Index of Solano County, California compiled by the Solano County Genealogical Society, Inc., Fairfield, California.

“Note Book” Vol. IV No. 4, April 1961 newsletter of the Solano County Historical Society.

Silveyville Cemetery District compiled the following information circa 1970:

- 1) Land Purchase Details, listing Tremont purchase on 11/15/29.
- 2) “Tremont Township” history.
- 3) Survey of Tremont Cemetery, 2/19/59.
- 4) “1871 History of the Westminster Presbyterian Church at Tremont 1971.”
- 5) Complete list of burials at Tremont Cemetery with name, date, and location.

“Solano County, California 1991 Pioneer File Index” compiled by Cordell Cowart and published by the Solano County Genealogical Society, Inc., Fairfield, California.

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**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: Historical collection of the Tremont Mite Society; Dixon Public Library, Archive Section; Silveyville Cemetery District

**Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):** \_\_\_\_\_

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**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreeage of Property** approximately two acres

**Latitude/Longitude Coordinates**

Datum if other than WGS84: \_\_\_\_\_  
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

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1. Latitude: 38.494370

Longitude: -121.704420

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

Solano County Parcel # 110-190-080. This approximately two acre parcel is located in the northeast corner of Solano County on Tremont Road, 2400' west of County Road 104 (known as Mace Boulevard when north in Yolo County, formerly known as Hyde Road in Solano County). The parcel continues west on Tremont Road for 220' and forms a rectangle extending 428.5' to the south.

**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundaries relate directly to the approximately two acres deeded first to the Tremont Mite Society, and then in 1929 surveyed and deeded when sold to the Silveyville Cemetery District.

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**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title: Emily B. Rowe, Trustee, and Stephen Mikesell

organization: Silveyville Cemetery District

street & number: 7075 Tremont Road

city or town: Davis state: CA zip code: 95618

e-mail: [rowecows@gmail.com](mailto:rowecows@gmail.com)

telephone: (707) 678-4715

date: September 2016; Revised November 2017

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**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.

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**Photo Log**

Name of Property: Westminster Presbyterian Church and Cemetery of Tremont  
City or Vicinity: Dixon  
County: Solano County  
State: California  
Photographer: Stephen Mikesell  
Date Photographed: September 15, 2017  
Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

- 1 of 11 Church building in setting, camera facing southwest
- 2 of 11 Cemetery in setting, camera facing west
- 3 of 11 Church façade, camera facing south
- 4 of 11 Detail of moulding, façade, camera facing south
- 5 of 11 West elevation of church, camera facing south
- 6 of 11 Rear of church with portable buildings, camera facing north
- 7 of 11 Balcony of church, camera facing north
- 8 of 11 Interior of church taken from balcony, camera facing south
- 9 of 11 Pulpit of church, camera facing south
- 10 of 11 General view of cemetery, camera facing south
- 11 of 11 Caretaker's trailer (noncontributing), camera facing southwest

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- Figure 1. Sketch Map/Photo Key
- Figure 2. Plan of Cemetery Plots
- Figure 3. 1910 Photo

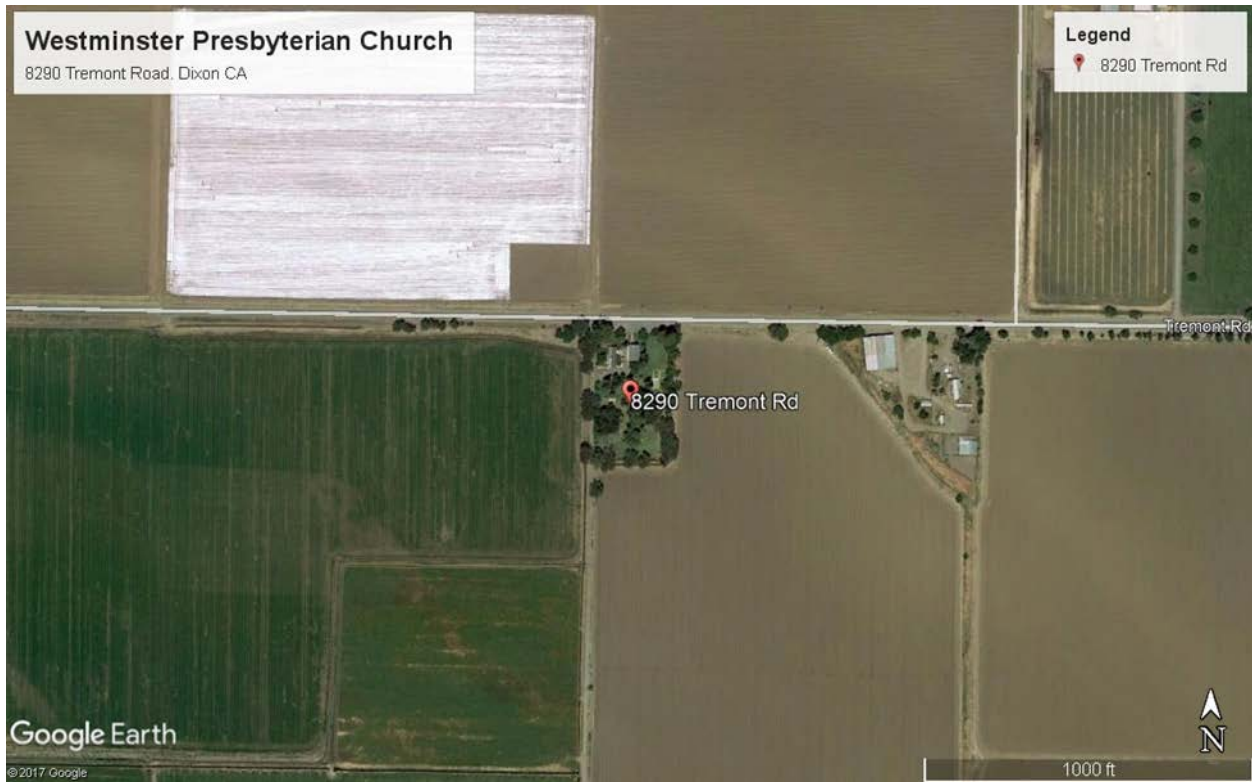
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## Location Map

Latitude: 38.494370

Longitude: -121.704420



**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.

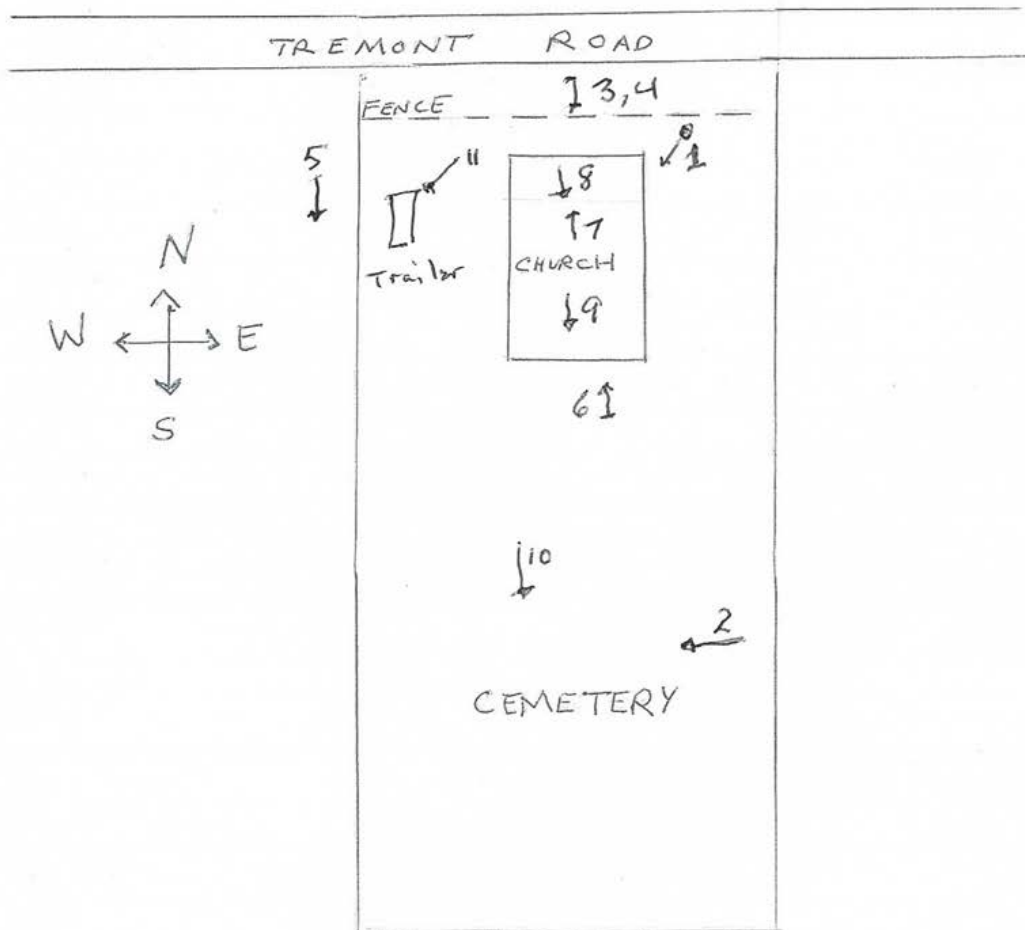


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Figure 1. Sketch Map/Photo Key

FIGURE 1. SKETCH MAP

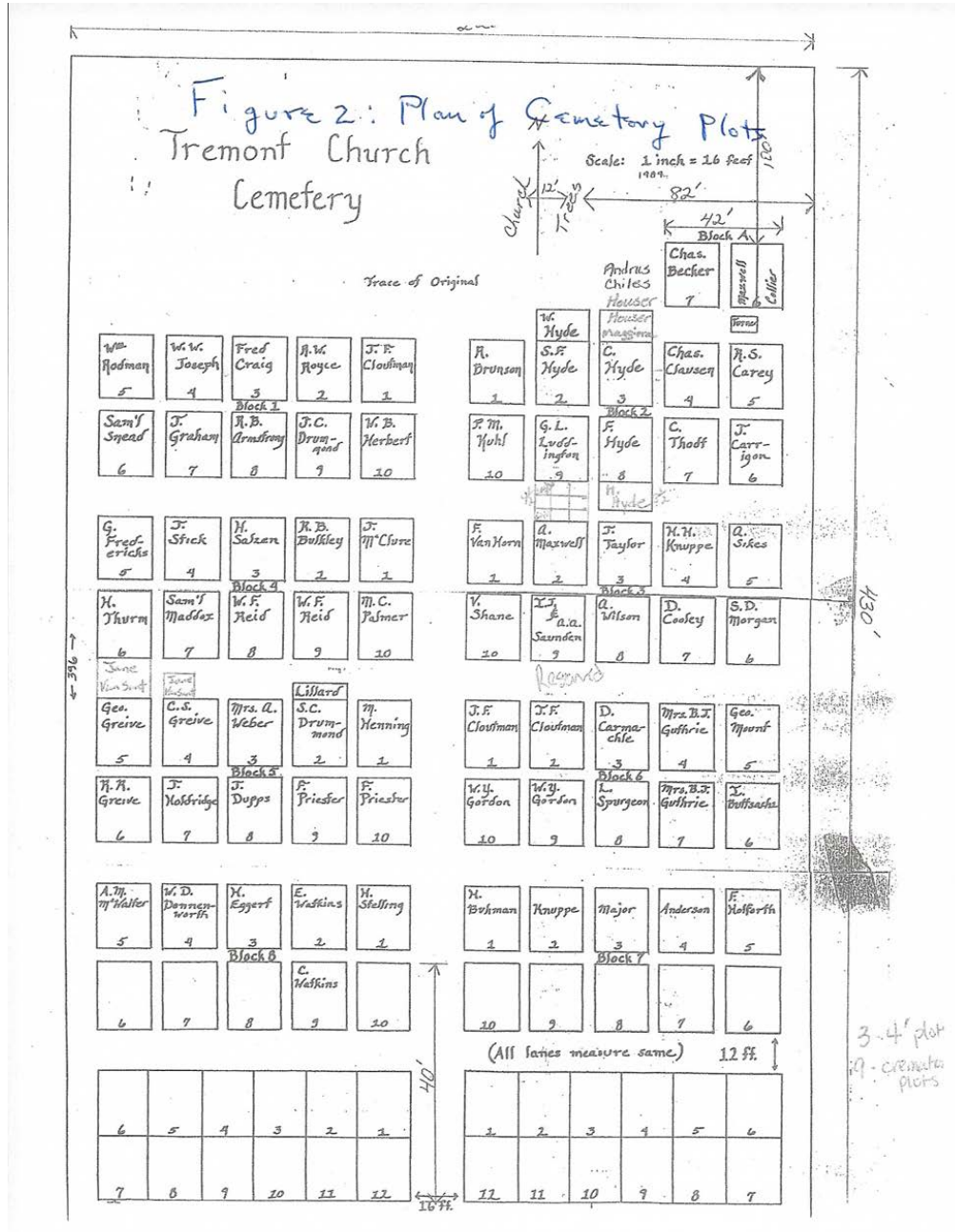


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**Figure 2. Plan of Cemetery Plots (date and source unknown)**

**NOTE:** As noted on the plan, image is a trace of an undated original. The names associated with the plots suggest it represents plots owned for future use, not necessarily who was buried in the plots at that time. Judging by the names of the owners, the plan was likely prepared in the nineteenth century, not long after the plots were sold.



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**Figure 3. Circa 1910, photographer unknown; image courtesy Tremont Mite Society**

