



Steeple Envy: The Evolution of Religious Architecture in Morris County, New Jersey 1758-1900

Frank L. Greenagel

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There are 104 meetinghouses and churches remaining in Morris County that were erected before 1900, illustrating the rich architectural legacy of the county. All are examined and illustrated in this authoritative work, the ninth volume in Dr. Greenagel's monumental work on the early religious architecture of the state. Special attention is paid to the founding, construction and architectural traditions, from the earliest Quaker meetinghouse in Randolph Township, through the Georgian, Greek Revival, Gothic, Romanesque, Italianate, and late eclectic Victorian styles in Dover and Morristown. The focus is as much on the social factors—the discarding of the old Calvinistic attitudes in favor of a search for a new gentility that expressed itself as refinement in speech, in dress, and in the outward manifestations of piety. Pride in one's community, one's congregation, one's material success, even one's nationality, is reflected in the religious architecture of the county. Greenagel writes about religion and architecture, but his real subject is culture and sociology. Every decade in the nineteenth century brought new affluence and new attitudes, resulting in a desire for larger, more refined churches, preferably with taller steeples than neighboring congregations. Overt competition had to be discreet, and cloaked in expressions of piety, but the evidence is there for those who will read it.

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