

## **CAPSULE SUMMARY**

**BA-296**

**Chapel of the Holy Comforter**

**130 West Seminary Avenue**

**Lutherville, Baltimore County**

**1888**

**Private**

The Chapel of the Holy Comforter, built in 1888, is significant as the first Episcopalian church in the town of Lutherville. Lutherville began, in 1852 as a planned village developed by the ministers of the Lutheran Church. In 1882, the rector of the Trinity Church, Towson, Reverend Dr. William H. H. Powers, began to hold Sunday afternoon services in the town of Lutherville. The congregation, led by Reverend Cleland Kinloch Nelson, John M. Nelson, and J. Collin Vincent, raised the \$2,800 for the construction of the church and hired architect T. C. Kennedy. The ground was broken on June 21, 1888 and later that same year the chapel was completed. The first service in the new chapel was held on September 27, 1888, but the building was not consecrated until September 19, 1889 when it was named the Chapel of the Holy Comforter.

The Victorian Gothic-style chapel has a cross-shaped foot-print formed by the dominant long nave ending in an apse and smaller cross wings extending to the southwest and northeast of the nave. An entry vestibule extends to the southeast from the façade and a small vestry extends to the northwest from the northeast cross wing. The nave is one story in height, three bays in width and five bays deep. Dwarfed in scale and massing by the nave, the wings also measure one story in height. The wings measure two bays wide and one bay deep. The building has a solid random-rubble stone foundation supporting the wood-frame structural system and steeply pitched cross-gable roof. The walls are clad in German weatherboard siding below the watertable. Unusual in its form, weatherboard siding with a large half-round mold is exhibited above the watertable. The side gables are detailed with square-butt wood shingles and a row of diamond-shaped wood shingles at the bottom. Scroll-sawn rafters are visible beneath the overhanging eaves and projecting gables. The roof features a short square steeple with wood louvered vents and a pyramidal roof rising from the ridge line near the rear of the church.

# Maryland Historical Trust

## Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. BA-296

### 1. Name of Property (indicate preferred name)

historic The Chapel of the Holy Comforter

other

### 2. Location

street and number 130 West Seminary Avenue not for publication

city, town Lutherville - Timonium vicinity

county Baltimore County

### 3. Owner of Property (give names and mailing addresses of all owners)

name Church of the Holy Comforter

street and number 130 West Seminary Avenue telephone Not Available

city, town Lutherville state MD zip code 21093

### 4. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Baltimore County Courthouse tax map and parcel: 60/129

city, town Towson liber 6432 folio 377

### 5. Primary Location of Additional Data

- Contributing Resource in National Register District  
 Contributing Resource in Local Historic District  
 Determined Eligible for the National Register/Maryland Register  
 Determined Ineligible for the National Register/Maryland Register  
 Recorded by HABS/HAER  
 Historic Structure Report or Research Report  
 Other

### 6. Classification

Category	Ownership	Current Function	Resource Count	
			Contributing	Noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce/trade	1	
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> defense		
<input type="checkbox"/> site		<input type="checkbox"/> domestic		
<input type="checkbox"/> object		<input type="checkbox"/> education		
		<input type="checkbox"/> funerary	1	0
		<input type="checkbox"/> government		
		<input type="checkbox"/> health care		
		<input type="checkbox"/> industry		
		<input type="checkbox"/> landscape		
		<input type="checkbox"/> recreation/culture		
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> religion		
		<input type="checkbox"/> social		
		<input type="checkbox"/> transportation		
		<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress		
		<input type="checkbox"/> unknown		
		<input type="checkbox"/> vacant/not in use		
		<input type="checkbox"/> other:		
			Number of Contributing Resources previously listed in the Inventory	
			0	

## 7. Description

Inventory No. BA-296

### Condition

<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> altered

Prepare both a one paragraph summary and a comprehensive description of the resource and its various elements as it exists today.

The Chapel of the Holy Comforter is located on the northwest corner of the intersection of West Seminary Avenue and Bellona Avenue. Sited on a slightly sloping grassy lot, the chapel sits amidst foundation plantings and mature trees and shrubs. A paved parking lot, accessible from both avenues, lies to the north of the building. When the congregation outgrew the small chapel, a new church was built in 1969 on the adjacent lot to the northeast of the historic building.

### EXTERIOR

The Victorian Gothic-style chapel, built in 1888, has a cross-shaped foot-print formed by the dominant long nave ending in an apse and smaller cross wings extending to the southwest and northeast of the nave. An entry vestibule extends to the southeast from the façade and a small vestry extends to the northwest from the northeast cross wing. The nave is one story in height, three bays in width and five bays deep. Dwarfed in scale and massing by the nave, the wings also measure one story in height. All the wings measure two bays wide and one bay deep. The building has a solid random-rubble stone foundation supporting the wood-frame structural system and steeply pitched cross-gable roof. The walls are clad in German weatherboard siding below the watertable. Unusual in its form, weatherboard siding with a large half-round mold is exhibited above the watertable. The side gables are detailed with square-butt wood shingles and a row of diamond-shaped wood shingles at the bottom. Cornerboards also decorate the building. Scroll-sawn rafters are visible beneath the overhanging eaves and projecting gables. The roof is covered with asphalt shingles and a short square steeple with wood louvered vents and a pyramidal roof rising from the ridge line near the rear of the church. A Celtic-style cross, also mounted on top of the ridge, is located directly above the entrance to the nave. One rebuilt exterior-side brick chimney is positioned on the northeast elevation as well the bulkhead entrance to the basement.

The principle elevation faces southeast and features a steeply-pitched gable-roof vestibule that contains a centrally placed entrance with a two-leaf wood paneled lancet door. Small cinquefoil windows flank the vestibule and the gable peak contains three symmetrically placed lancet wood louvered vents. The southeast elevation of the southwest and northeast cross wings both display identical single-leaf wood four-paneled doors and paired 4-light fixed wood-sash windows. All the openings are set in square-edged surrounds.

On the northeast elevation, one set of paired 1-light wood-sash windows light the entry vestibule. Two lancet windows with 1/1 fixed wood sashes light the nave. A pointed arch window with a vernacular tracery pattern provides lighting for the wing. One single-leaf door with 9-lights over two panels provides entry into the vestry.

The northwest elevation of the chapel is dominated by the rounded apse, which is pierced by five 1-light lancet windows. The vestry wing to the northeast and the cross wing to the southwest exhibit paired 2/2-light wood-sash windows. All the windows are set into flush wood surrounds.

The southwest elevation repeats many of the elements found on the northeast elevation. It has one set of paired 1-light wood-sash windows piercing the wall of the entry vestry, two lancet windows with 1/1 fixed wood-sash windows in the nave wall and a pointed arch window with a vernacular tracery window in the southwest wall of the cross gable. The windows all have flush wood surrounds.

### INTERIOR

The Chapel of the Holy Comforter features a simple Latin-cross plan with a front vestibule and two rooms flanking the nave. The materials and details are original to the church. The floor of the nave is covered with carpeting and the ceiling features two wooden open arched brace trusses and thin wood slats. The walls feature wainscoting, consisting of grooved vertical boards and chair rail with a projecting fascia and a cyma reversa molding. Above the wainscoting, the painted walls are covered with lath and

# Maryland Historical Trust

## Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

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Continuation Sheet

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plaster. The multifoil windows in the southeast wall and the lancet windows in the northwest, northeast and southwest walls feature stained glass and are set in wood casings with an astragal and fascia molding. Each of the windows is detailed with a square-edged sill with an astragal molding. The multifoil windows and the lancet windows in the apse display decorative geometric patterns. The lancet windows in the nave are dedicated to the memory of noteworthy church members, including Reverend William H. H. Powers, the first rector to hold services in Lutherville. All the stained glass dates to the third quarter of the twentieth century. Two pointed arched openings, one large and one small, lead from the nave to the cross wings in the northeast and southwest walls. The smaller openings are set in a wood surround. The nave contains ten rows of pews divided by a central aisle. The wood pews display decorative scroll work and reliefs of decorated-style crosses. The rounded apse section of the nave houses the altar. Two wide steps raise the altar slightly above the congregation. At the base of the steps is a marble baptismal font. A wood rail with square decorative posts and arched openings further divides the altar from the congregation.

In the front vestibule, the walls are covered with lath and plaster, the ceiling is clad with wood slats, and the floor is carpeted. The windows and door openings within the entry vestibule are set in wood casings with a fascia and astragal molding. The exterior doors are paneled with grooved diagonal boards and a brass knob. The double-leaf wood 2-paneled door in the northwest wall of the entry vestibule opens into the nave of the chapel.

The southwest cross wing, referred to as the organ chamber, houses a pipe organ installed in 1900. The organ fills both arched openings and access to the chamber is limiting due to the size of the organ. A small three-panel wood door surrounded with a reeded casing provides access to the organ chamber. The paneled door has an astragal, cavetto, fillet, and an ovolo molding profile with each recessed panel. Inside the organ chamber, the random-width oak floors are tongue-and-groove. This room has similar wall and ceiling treatment as the nave. The large lancet window in the west elevation does not contain stained glass.

The northeast cross wing has remained open and currently contains two pews. The tracery window also contains stained glass set in a geometric pattern. North of this wing is the vestry, the least ornate room of the chapel. The paneled door to the vestry has a molding profile consisting of an ovolo and a fillet. The window and door openings are decorated with the same molding profile found throughout the chapel. The walls are entirely painted lath and plaster. The ceiling and floor are similar to the nave except the vestry contains a six-inch-high baseboard with a cant, cyma recta, fillet, and fascia board molding profile.

## 8. Significance

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Period	Areas of Significance	Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> health/medicine	<input type="checkbox"/> performing arts	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> invention	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-1999	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment/ recreation	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> religion	
<input type="checkbox"/> 2000-	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> ethnic heritage	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science	
	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/ settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> social history	
	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning		<input type="checkbox"/> maritime industry	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation	
	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation		<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:	
<b>Specific dates</b>	1888, 1889	<b>Architect/Builder</b>	T. C. Kennedy		
<b>Construction dates</b>	1888				

Evaluation for:

National Register

Maryland Register

not evaluated

Prepare a one-paragraph summary statement of significance addressing applicable criteria, followed by a narrative discussion of the history of the resource and its context. (For compliance reports, complete evaluation on a DOE Form - see manual.)

### SIGNIFICANCE STATEMENT

The Chapel of the Holy Comforter, built in 1888, is significant as the first Episcopalian church in the town of Lutherville. Lutherville began, in 1852 as a planned village developed by the ministers of the Lutheran Church. It is also significant as an excellent example of a Gothic Revival-style chapel in Baltimore County. In addition, the half-round weatherboard siding exhibited on the Chapel is an unusual form of cladding.

### HISTORY

The Chapel of the Holy Comforter, located at 130 West Seminary Road, is located within the town of Lutherville in the Eighth District of Baltimore County. The Eighth District is bounded on the north by the Fifth and Seventh Districts, on the east by the Ninth and Tenth Districts, on the south by the Ninth and Third Districts, and on the west by the Fourth and Fifth Districts. It is the third largest district of the county covering over 62 square miles. In 1881, it had a population of approximately 6000, which was down by over one thousand from the prior decade. During this period its primary source of income was its mining for iron ore, marble, and limestone. It also maintained numerous grist mills and saw mills in addition to paper factories.(1)

The area now considered Lutherville originally consisted of York Road and Bellona Avenue in 1850. York Road originated in Towsontown and traveled northeast through Baltimore County. Bellona Avenue began in Govanstown, a small community south of Towsontown. Above Lutherville, the Susquehanna Railroad parallels York Road, which extends from the center of Towsontown to the northwest. Shown on the 1850 atlas are four residences depicted north of Bellona Avenue in the Lutherville area.(1)

Lutherville began as a planned village developed by the ministers of the Lutheran Church. The ministers, including Reverend Dr. Morris, purchased the Brice Estate located just west of the Susquehanna Railroad and developed it into lots to be sold individually. The proceeds made from the real estate venture went towards the construction of the female seminary. Opening in 1854, the seminary's existence in Lutherville became an attraction for the area as a wealthy suburban village. In 1868, Lutherville became the first incorporated town in Baltimore County.(2)

By 1877, according to the Hopkins Atlas, Lutherville had developed as a commercial and residential center and approximately twelve streets were developed and platted by this time. Within the village of Lutherville about fifty buildings are depicted on the 1877 atlas.(3) Scharf, the author of History of Baltimore City and County, wrote in 1881 that the population of Lutherville totaled 382 inhabitants.(4) This small town increased by nearly fifty percent in the next sixteen years, reaching a total of 700 residents by 1897. It was during this population growth that the Chapel of the Holy Comforter was constructed.

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In 1882, the rector of the Trinity Church, Towson, Reverend Dr. William H. H. Powers, began to hold Sunday afternoon services in the town of Lutherville. Prior to this the Episcopalians of Lutherville had to travel two miles to attend services in Towson. At first the congregation held services in nearby homes, but as the number of members continued to increase the need for a permanent meeting place was realized. In 1888 Amos Swen and John Piersol sold their land on the corner of Bellona and Seminary Avenues for \$300 to the congregation. The congregation, led by Reverend Cleland Kinloch Nelson, John M. Nelson, and J. Collin Vincent, raised the \$2,800 for the construction of the church and hired architect T. C. Kennedy. The ground was broken on June 21, 1888 and later that same year the chapel was completed. The first service in the new chapel was held on September 27, 1888, but the building was not consecrated until September 19, 1889 when it was named the Chapel of the Holy Comforter.(5)

The congregation remained small for the first half of the twentieth century. In 1901, the number of summer residents sharply diminished due to a typhoid epidemic; and in 1918 the Sunday school was disbanded due to a lack of pupils. In 1936, the congregation numbered only 36. At the end of World War II, the Holy Comforter Chapel witnessed a boom in membership as the area became a suburb of Towson. In 1969, the congregation outgrew the chapel and a new church building was constructed on the neighboring lot, 120 West Seminary Avenue. The Chapel of the Holy Comforter continued as a mission under the Trinity Church until May 16, 1982 when the Diocese of Maryland recognized it as the Church of the Holy Comforter. The Reverend Joseph T. Webb, III, became the first rector of the church.(6)

### ENDNOTES

1. J. Thomas Scharf, *History of Baltimore City and County From the Earliest Period to the Present Day: Including Biographical Sketches of Their Representative Men* (Philadelphia, PA: Louis H. Everts, 1881. Reprinted by Higginson Book Company, Salem, MA), p. 876.
2. J.C. Sidney, *Map of the City and County of Baltimore, Maryland, from Original Surveys* (Baltimore, MD: James M. Stephens, 1850).
3. Scharf, p. 877 and Neal A. Brooks and Eric G. Rockel, *A History of Baltimore County* (Towson, MD: Friends of the Towson Library, Inc., 1979.) p. 287-288.
4. Scharf, p. 877.
5. *The Chapel of the Holy Comforter, Church History Pamphlet*. Unpublished, 1989.
6. *Church History Pamphlet*, 1989.

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## 9. Major Bibliographical References

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See continuation sheet.

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## 10. Geographical Data

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Acreage of surveyed property 0.25

Acreage of historical setting 0.25

Quadrangle name Towson, MD

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

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### Verbal boundary description and justification

The Chapel of the Holy Comforter is located at 130 West Seminary Avenue in Lutherville in the Eighth District of Baltimore County. It has historically been associated with Tax Map 60, Parcel 129 since its construction circa 1888.

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## 11. Form Prepared By

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name/title J. Riggle & K. Baynard, Architectural Historians

organization E.H.T. Traceries

date 3/7/03

street and number 1121 Fifth Street, NW

telephone 202/393-1199

city or town Washington,

state DC zip code 20001

The Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties was officially created by an Act of the Maryland Legislature to be found in the Annotated Code of Maryland, Article 41, Section 181 KA, 1974 supplement.

The survey and inventory are being prepared for information and record purposes only and do not constitute any infringement of individual property rights.

return to: **Maryland Historical Trust**  
DHCD/DHCP  
100 Community Place  
Crownsville MD 21032  
410-514-7600

**Maryland Historical Trust**  
**Maryland Inventory of**  
**Historic Properties Form**

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Atlas of Baltimore County, Maryland. Philadelphia, PA: G. M. Hopkins, 1877.

Baltimore County Historic Inventory.

Brooks, Neal A. and Eric G. Rockel. A History of Baltimore County. Towson, MD: Friends of the Towson Library, Inc., 1979.

The Chapel of the Holy Comforter. Church history pamphlet, unpublished: 1989.

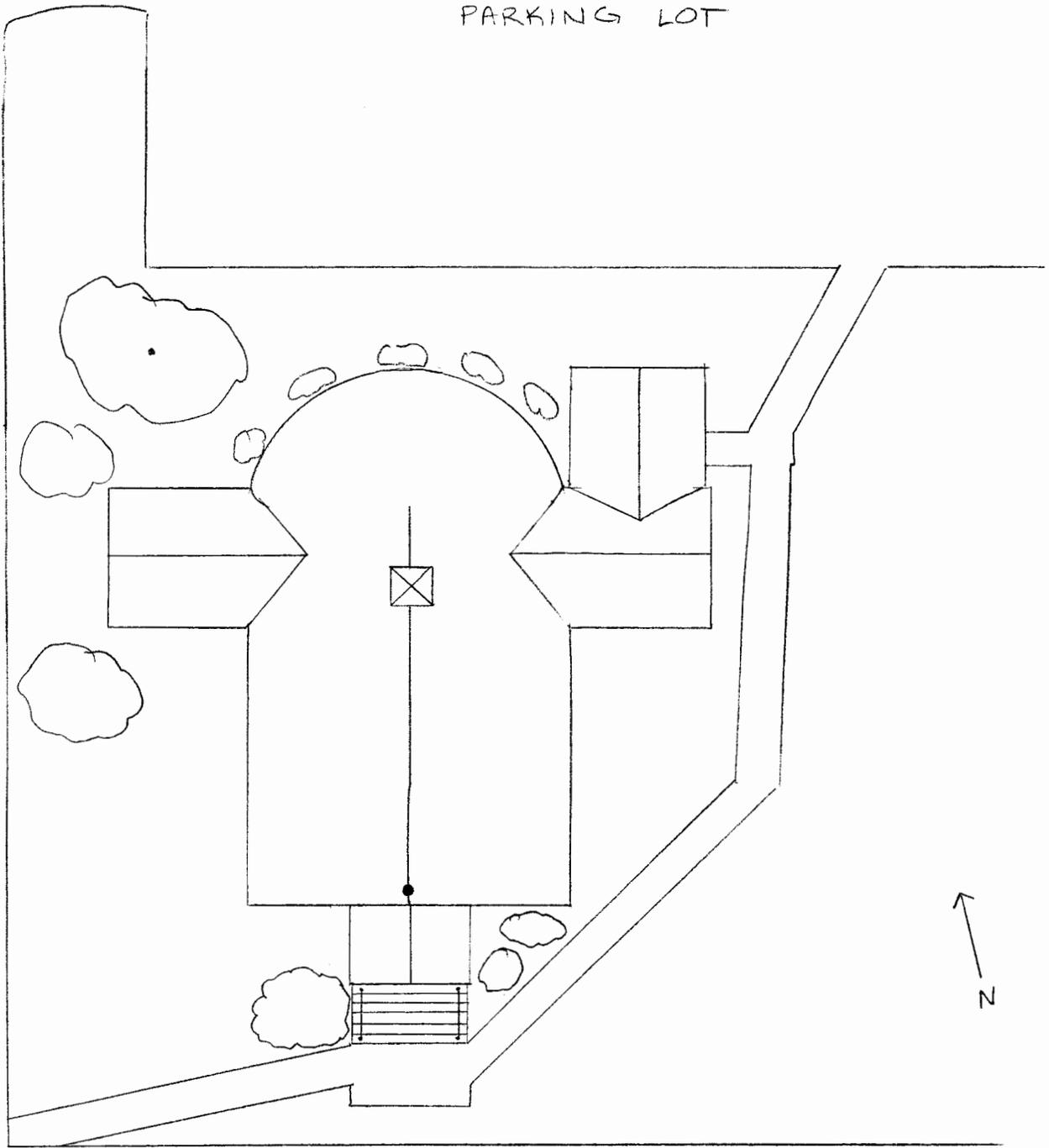
Map of Baltimore County. Philadelphia, PA: G. W. Bromley, 1915.

Scharf, J. Thomas. History of Baltimore City and County From the Earliest Period to the Present Day: Including Biographical Sketches of Their Representative Men. Philadelphia, PA: Louis H. Everts, 1881. Reprinted by Higginson Book Company, Salem, MA.

Sidney, J. C. Map of the City and County of Baltimore, Maryland, from Original Surveys. Baltimore, MD: James M. Stephens, 1850.

PARKING LOT

BELLONA AVENUE



WEST SEMINARY AVENUE

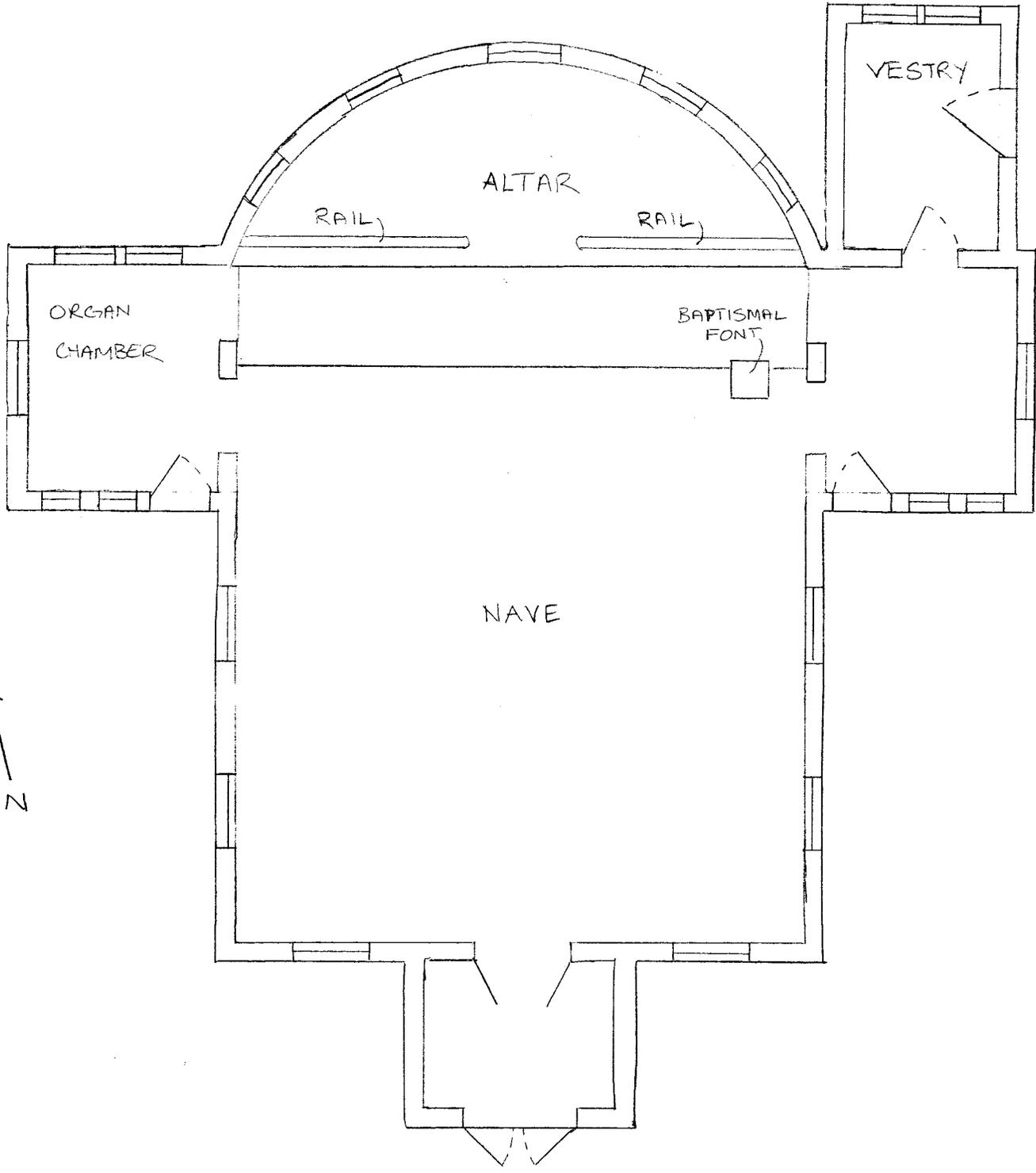
BA-296  
THE CHAPEL OF THE HOLY COMFORTER  
130 WEST SEMINARY AVENUE  
SITE PLAN

BA-296

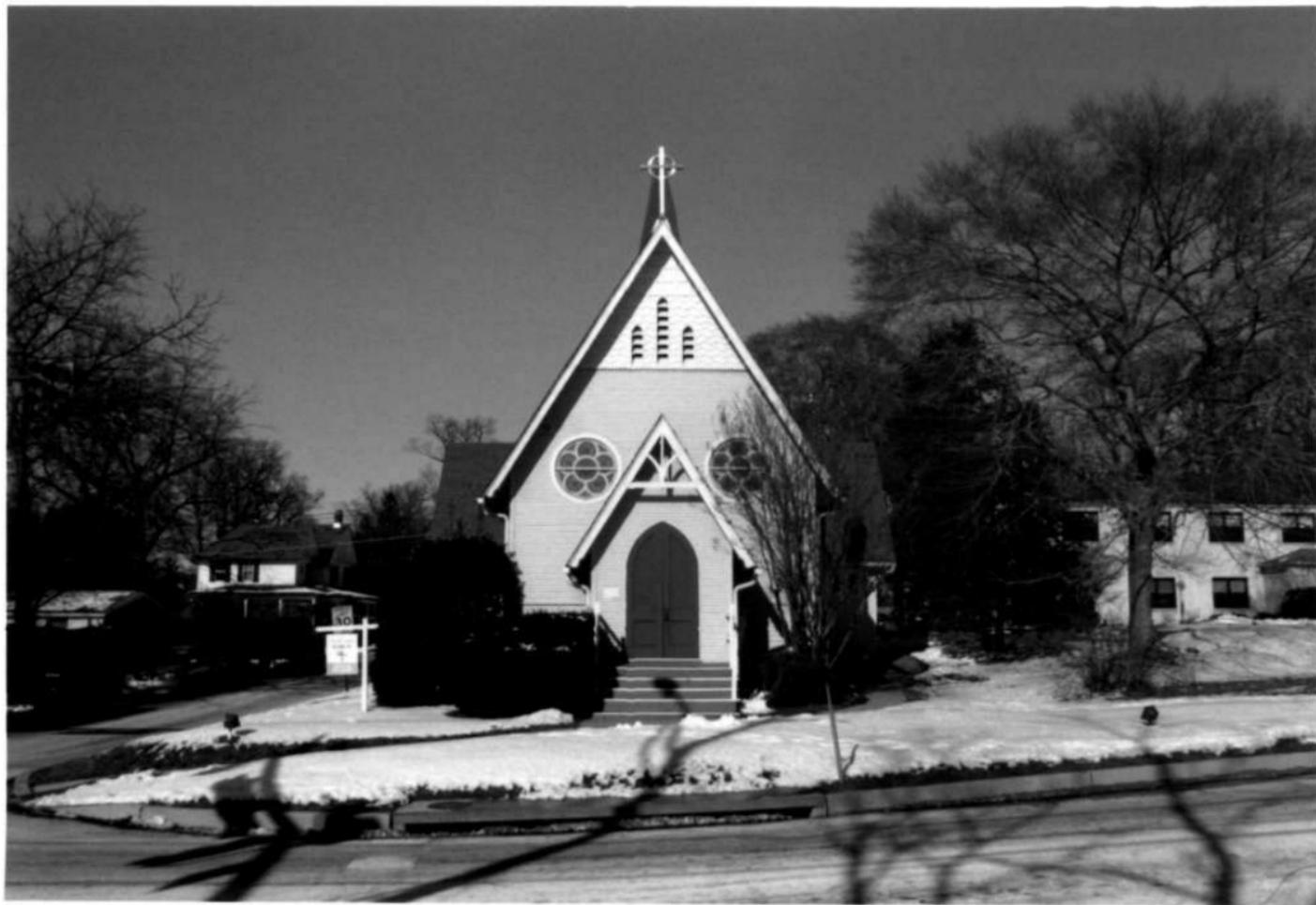
THE CHAPEL OF THE HOLY CONFORTER

130 WEST SEMINARY AVENUE

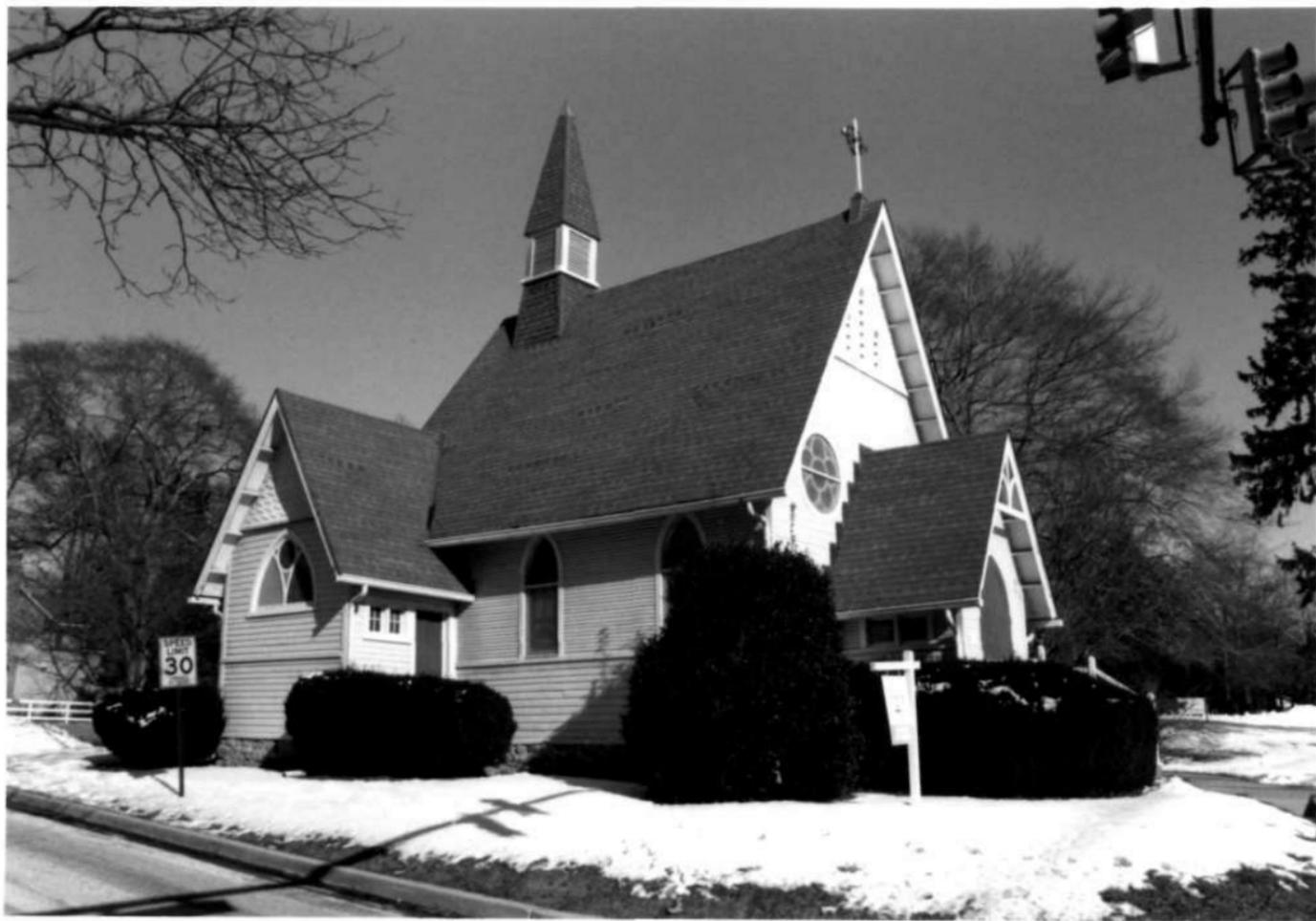
FIRST FLOOR PLAN







BA - 2916  
CHURCH OF THE HOLY COMFORTER  
130 WEST SEMINARY AVENUE  
LUTHERVILLE  
BALTIMORE COUNTY, MD  
TRACERIES  
2/2003  
MD SHPO  
SW ELEVATION  
1 of 5



BA- 296

CHURCH OF THE HOLY COMFORTER  
130 WEST SEMINARY AVENUE

LUTHERVILLE  
BALTIMORE County, MD

TRACERIES

2/2003

MD SHPO

WEST CORNER, VIEW LOOKING NE

2 of 5



BA-296

CHAPEL OF THE HOLY COMFORTER  
130 WEST SEMINARY AVENUE  
LUTHERVILLE  
BALTIMORE COUNTY, MD

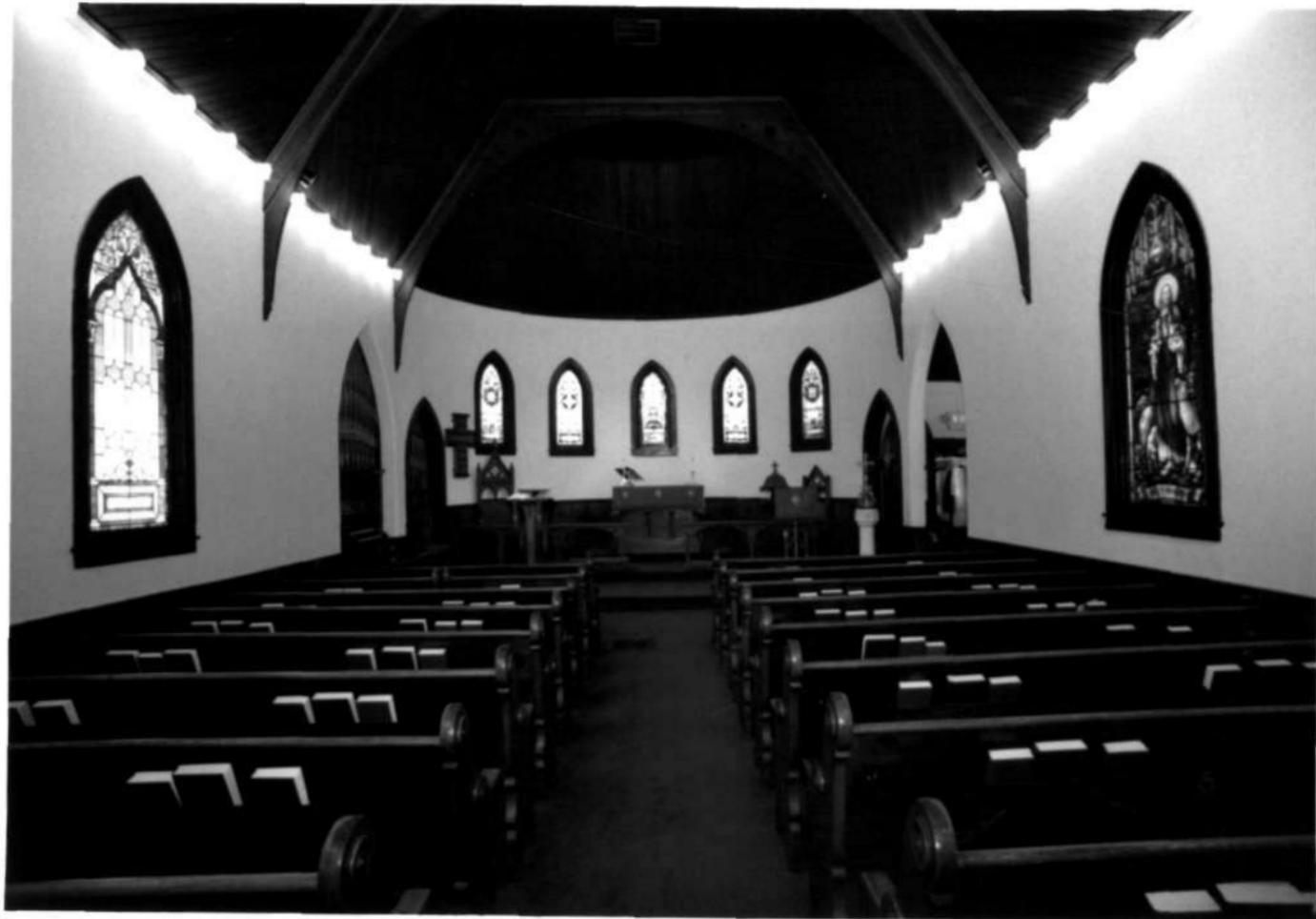
TRACERIES

2/2003

MD SHPO

INTERIOR, VIEW LOOKING SOUTHWEST

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BA-296

CHAPEL OF THE HOLY COMFORTER

130 WEST SEMINARY AVENUE

LUTHERVILLE

BALTIMORE COUNTY, MD

TRACERIES

2/2003

MD SHPD

INTERIOR, VIEW LOOKING NE

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BA-296

Chapel of the Holy Comforter

130 WEST Seminary Avenue

LUTHERVILLE

BALTIMORE COUNTY, MD

TRAILERIES

2/2003

MD SHPD

INTERIOR, VIEW LOOKING NE

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Form 100-445 (5/6)

1. STATE Maryland  
 COUNTY Baltimore  
 TOWN Lutherville VICINITY  
 STREET NO. Corner of Bellona and West Seminary Avenues  
 ORIGINAL OWNER Trinity Episcopal Church  
 ORIGINAL USE church  
 PRESENT OWNER same  
 PRESENT USE same  
 WALL CONSTRUCTION frame (ash)  
 NO. OF STORIES one

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY INVENTORY

2. NAME Episcopal Chapel of the Holy Comforter  
 DATE OR PERIOD 1888-1889  
 STYLE Gothic Revival  
 ARCHITECT T.C. Kennedy  
 BUILDER

3. FOR LIBRARY OF CONGRESS USE

4. NOTABLE FEATURES, HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE AND DESCRIPTION

OPEN TO PUBLIC

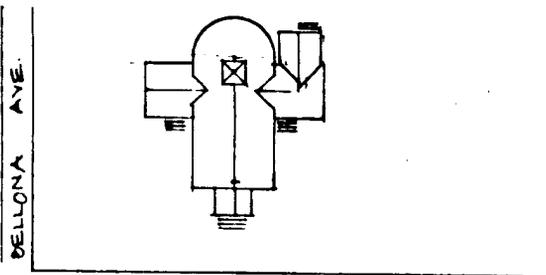
The chapel, a mission established by Trinity Episcopal Church of Towson, was begun January 18, 1888 and dedicated September 19, 1889. The chapel was built at a cost of \$2,800 and was able to seat 100 parishioners who did not wish to travel to Towson for services.

The structure is characterized by the handling of the semi-circular apse under a half conical roof which curves between the slopes of the main gabled roof. Above the roof ridge of the apse end there is a small four sided belfry with a spired roof. The shingled apse contains a band of five pointed arched windows with continuous sills above the altar level of the interior.

The front facade contains a vestibule or narthex with its gabled roof ornamented with a faintly Gothic decoration, flush with the verge boarding, above a collar beam. The paneled double doors fill the pointed arched opening into the narthex which has pairs of small square windows set under the low eaves. Flanking the narthex roof on the main front gable wall are two rose-type windows. At the main gable's collar beam level three arched openings are filled with louvers and are surrounded with decorative shingling.

Nave windows, two at each side elevation, have pointed arched openings with colored, commemorative glazing. Their sills are set on German siding wainscoting. Above the wainscot the walls have narrow horizontal clapboards. Near the apse a smaller chapel room and organ chamber form flanking transepts to the nave. A sacristy wing has been added to the rear of the chapel wing.

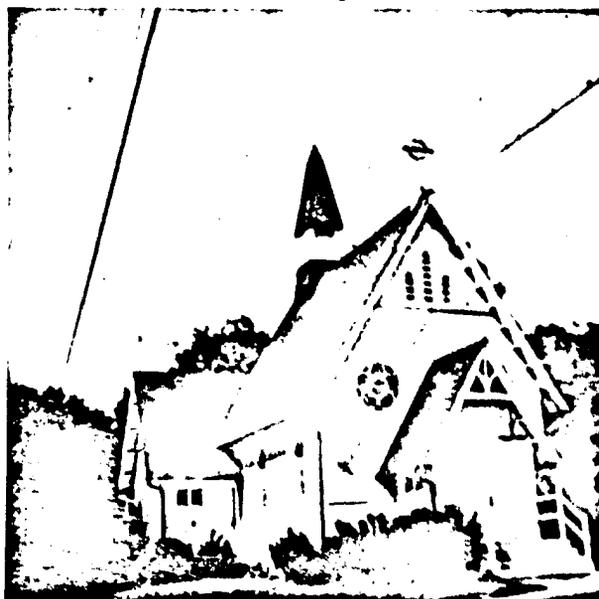
5. PHYSICAL CONDITION OF STRUCTURE Endangered No



6. LOCATION MAP (Plan Optional)

8. PUBLISHED SOURCES (Author, Title, Pages)  
 INTERVIEWS, RECORDS, PHOTOS, ETC.  
 Brief History of Trinity Church,  
 Towson, 1860-1960, Towson, 1960.

Rodd L. Wheaton Sept. 1971



SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION AND PHOTOGRAPHS MAY BE ADDED ON SHEET OF SAME SIZE

The transept gables, the height of the narthex gable, are filled with decorative shingles and a large pointed arched window, imposts at the sill, with simplified Gothic tracery.

The accompanying old photograph, taken in the early decades of this century, shows that the open belfry with its bell had arches spanning between the corner posts above its shingled podium at the roof ridge. The spire was topped with a metal finial. There were turned newels at the entry steps.

Inside, the church has typical golden oak interiors with brass accents which include the pulpit. The organ case is built into the wall screening the chapel from the organ chamber with its original pipes and hand pump. The ceiling is sheathed in narrow diagonal boards while the openings have wide flat trim.



circa 1915