

D-24

Bethlehem Methodist Episcopal Church
Taylor's Island
1857-58, 1873-75
Private

Bethlehem Methodist Episcopal Church stands out as one of the most sophisticated and best preserved of the mid nineteenth century Greek Revival influenced buildings in Dorchester County. Erected in 1857-58 and designed by Baltimore architect-builders Harman & North, the rectangular temple front church boasts a finely executed pressed brick main (west) elevation laid in narrow butter joints. The three-bay façade is strictly balanced with wide brick pilasters on each corner that rise to an enclosed Greek Revival pediment, which has an inset marble datestone inscribed Bethlehem M. E. Church, 1857. Rising atop the gable roof is an intricately built octagonal belfry and spire that rest on a square platform, which was added during a sizable renovation around 1873. The belfry is enclosed in a domed octagonal drum featuring a classical rounded arch recess on each face. The dome of the belfry is topped by an octagonal spire that is accented with a five-point copper star at its tip. While the Bethlehem Church follows largely the mid nineteenth century Greek Revival temple form, there are a few details—such as the bracketed front door and window lintels and the turned baluster staircase inside—that point to the influence of the mid nineteenth century romantic revival known as the Italianate style.

A formation of a Methodist congregation on Taylor's Island is believed to have been established as early as 1781, and the early members financed the construction of a sizable chapel in 1787 on land donated by Moses and Elizabeth LeCompte. The church trustees, Benjamin Keene, Jr., William Geoghegan, Thomas Hooper, John Ashcom

Travers, Peter Harrington, John Aaron, John Geoghegan, John Robson, and Isaac Creighton, were charged with the "care and management of the Chapel lately built on Taylor's for the use of the Ministers belonging to the Methodist Episcopal Church." The 1787 chapel lasted the congregation seventy years. In November 1856, several trustees, including Samuel Travers, Travers Staplefort, John H. McGuire, James Thompson, James Palmer, Solomon F. Kirwan, and Levi D. Travers, met to assess the condition of the chapel and to discuss the practicality of repairing the old building verses building a new structure. While it was thought that the old chapel could be repaired and made "very comfortable, but it would require considerable work to make it so...& then it would not be a handsome house." The committee opted for the preference to building a new church on a piece of ground across the road that was offered by Samuel Travers. A building committee was then formed which included Samuel Travers, chairman; Samuel M. Travers, treasurer and solicitor of subscriptions; Travers Staplefort, Solomon F. Kirwan, William M. Cator, William D. Travers, and Levi D. Travers, secretary. With the death of William D. Travers shortly afterwards, Dr. Washington A. Smith was substituted in his stead. Rather than looking to local resources and talent for the design and construction of their new church, the committee turned to Baltimore and retains the services of architect-builders, Harman & North. The old church was sold to Levi D. Travers, who moved the old chapel off its site and converted it into a barn. By contract with Harman & North, the construction of the 35' x 50' brick church cost \$2,598.18, while additional expenses such as interior frescoing, furniture, shipping, etc. raised the total to \$3,245.12. Most of the funds were raised from those living on Taylor's Island or mainland Dorchester County, but not an insignificant amount was sent down from Baltimore City. Secretary

Levi D. Travers stated in a summary of the project, printed in the *Cambridge Herald* in November 1858,

Much gratitude is felt, and many thanks are due Capt. Samuel M. Travers (a member of the building committee) for the most noble and generous part he took in this laudable enterprise. We deem it property to state that it was mainly through his untiring zeal and influence, with his large circle of acquaintances, that we were able to erect so handsome and commodious a house of worship; also, much thanks are due to other members of the building committee, (as Capt. Wm W. Cator and Dr. Washington A. Smith) not only for their liberal contributions, but for their efficient services on the discharge of the trust committed to them by the church as members of the building committee.

Within three years of the completion of their sophisticated new church, the Bethlehem congregation addressed the volatile issues surrounding the Civil War, the most explosive of them was slavery. Methodists had been divided sharply on issues surrounding slave ownership during the ante-bellum decades, so much so that a Methodist Episcopal Church South, which sanctioned slave holding by its membership, was established in 1844. As the years passed and a national conflict loomed with the dawn of the 1860s, more and more congregations took sides, and the Bethlehem congregation aligned itself with the Methodist Episcopal Church South.

Maryland Historical Trust Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. D-24

1. Name of Property (indicate preferred name)

historic Bethlehem Methodist Episcopal Church
 other Bethlehem Methodist Episcopal Church South

2. Location

street and number Hooper's Neck Road not for publication
 city, town Taylor's Island x vicinity
 county Dorchester

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

name Grace Foundation, Inc.
 street and number P. O. Box 119 telephone
 city, town Taylor's Island state Maryland zip code 21669

4. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Dorchester County Clerk of Court liber MLB 342 folio 380
 city, town Cambridge tax map 58 tax parcel 91 tax ID number 059611

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 at MHT
 Other:

6. Classification

Category	Ownership	Current Function		Resource Count
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape	Contributing
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce/trade	<input type="checkbox"/> recreation/culture	<u>1</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> defense	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> religion	
<input type="checkbox"/> site		<input type="checkbox"/> domestic	<input type="checkbox"/> social	
<input type="checkbox"/> object		<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation	<u>1</u>
		<input type="checkbox"/> funerary	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<u>2</u>
		<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> unknown	
		<input type="checkbox"/> health care	<input type="checkbox"/> vacant/not in use	
		<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> other:	
				Noncontributing
				<input type="checkbox"/> buildings
				<input type="checkbox"/> sites
				<input type="checkbox"/> structures
				<input type="checkbox"/> objects
				<input type="checkbox"/> Total
				Number of Contributing Resources previously listed in the Inventory

7. Description

Inventory No. D-24

Condition

excellent deteriorated
 good ruins
 fair altered

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

DESCRIPTION SUMMARY

Bethlehem Methodist Episcopal Church, built in 1857-58, stands on the east side of Hooper's Neck Road across the street from its cemetery, the site of the original church erected in 1787. The single-story gable front Greek Revival/Italianate church faces west with its gable roof oriented on an east/west axis. The symmetrically balanced neoclassical Greek Revival front is laid in pressed brick with narrow butter joints while the sides and rear elevations are laid in five-course common bond. The outside corners of the three-bay main façade are defined by pilasters that rise gable end pediment trimmed in wood with a bold dentiled bed across the lower cornice of the tympanum. Inset in the brickwork of the tympanum is a marble datestone inscribed, Bethlehem M. E. Church, 1857." Rising atop the gable roof is a belfry and copper covered broach spire surmounted with a copper star, added around 1873. The interior is largely original with a transverse stair hall fronting the sanctuary. Vertical board wainscoting trims the perimeter of the room with a plaster wall finish above. The ceiling is covered with a fiber acoustical tile. Hanging from the ceiling is a combination of late nineteenth and early twentieth century lighting. The church site is accompanied by a historic cemetery containing graves from the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries. A few family plots are framed by decorative iron fences.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

Bethlehem Methodist Episcopal Church is a finely built and well-preserved Greek Revival brick structure that stands on the east side of Hooper's Neck Road in the center of Taylor's Island, Dorchester County, Maryland. Built in 1857-58, the rectangular brick structure boasts a finely laid stretcher bond front laid in pressed brick with narrow butter joints, while the side and rear elevations are laid in five-course common bond. The brick walls rise to a medium pitched gable roof covered with asphalt shingles. Rising atop the roof is an octagonal belfry surmounted by a copper sheathed broach spire added around 1873. Fixed atop the spire is a five-pointed copper star. Located across Hooper's Neck Road is a eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth century cemetery that contains many monuments and markers as well decorative iron fence surrounding family burial plots. The site of the original eighteenth century chapel is located there.

The west (main) elevation is a symmetrical three-bay façade with a center entrance and flanking nine-over-nine sash windows. The double set of front doors is defined by inset octagonal panels as is a wall section above the doors. The doorway is framed by a wide surround surmounted by a heavy cornice enhanced with dentiled bed molding and supported visually by decorative Victorian brackets. The long nine-over-nine sash windows to each side are accented with a projecting molded lintel supported on decorative brackets as well. Trimming the outside corners of the wall elevation are projecting pilasters highlighted by white capitals. The gable end of the church is finished with an enclosed pediment that is enriched with a dentiled bed molding along its cornice. Fixed within the tympanum is a marble datestone inscribed "Bethlehem M. E. Church, 1857." The tower above consists of an octagonal drum that rests on a square platform, and each face of the drum is finished with an arched neoclassical recess.

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Continuation Sheet

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The octagonal drum is topped by an octagonal dome shaped cover that transitions gracefully into the octagonal spire. The dome and spire are covered with seamed copper. Trustees minutes record that the belfry and spire were added around 1873.

The side elevations, laid in five-course common bond, are defined by three twelve-over-twelve sash windows flanked with original louvered shutters that swing on original hardware. The window sash are topped by an arched recess, with the recess infilled with brick. Stretching across the base of the roof is a corbelled brick cornice. Rising through the wall and piercing the roofline between the second and third bays from the east corner is a single flue brick stove chimney.

The rear (east) wall is dominated by a single-story shed roofed apse executed in five-course common bond brick, and the side walls of the apse are pierced by four-over-four sash windows flanked by shutters. The gable end of the church is finished with a flush end trimmed with a plain bargeboard.

The interior of the church is largely original with a transverse hall fronting the sanctuary. The front hall contains a quarter turn staircase that accesses the balcony. A boldly turned newel post and a series of turned balusters support a mahogany handrail. The staircase was part of the sizable renovation around 1873. Double door openings provide access to the sanctuary, and the doors have the flush panel and bead finish. The ceiling of the transverse hall is covered with fiber based acoustical tile. The sanctuary is fitted with vertical board wainscoting and plaster walls. The twelve-over-twelve sanctuary windows are accented with an arched recess in the plaster above each window opening. The floors are refinished pine, and the ceiling has an acoustical tile covering. At the west end of the sanctuary there is a two-tiered platform for the pulpit and altar furniture. The raised platform is surrounded by a turned baluster railing, another feature introduced with the 1873 renovation. Located in the northeast corner of the first floor is a small storage closet, identified as a "Library Room" in the trustees' minutes, and it has built-in shelving for books, bibles and hymnals. Hanging from the ceiling is a combination of late nineteenth and early twentieth century chandeliers.

An access hole in the ceiling within the balcony provides entrance into an unfinished space with exposed yellow pine roof framing members. The balcony has a tiered platform.

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 history	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation		<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other: _____

Specific dates	Founded 1781	Architect/Builder	Messrs. Harman & North
Construction dates	1857-58, 1873-76 renovation		

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 projects, complete evaluation on a DOE Form – see manual.)

SIGNIFICANCE SUMMARY

Bethlehem Methodist Episcopal Church stands out as the best executed and well preserved mid nineteenth century example of Greek Revival ecclesiastical architecture in Dorchester County. Built in 1857-58 and designed by Baltimore architect-builders Harman and North, the rectangular temple front church boasts a finely laid pressed brick main elevation executed in narrow butter joints. The three-bay façade is strictly balanced with wide brick pilasters on each corner that rise to an enclosed Greek Revival pediment, which has an inset marble datestone inscribed Bethlehem M. E. Church, 1857. Rising atop the gable roof is an intricate octagonal belfry and spire resting atop a square platform that was added around 1873. The belfry is enclosed in a domed octagonal drum featuring a classical rounded arched recess on each face. The dome of the belfry is topped with an octagonal spire that is accented with a five-point copper star at its tip. While the Bethlehem Church follows the mid nineteenth century Greek Revival format for the most part, there are a few details such as the bracketed door and window lintels on the front, and the turned baluster staircase inside that point to the mid nineteenth century romantic revivals such as the Italianate style.

HISTORY AND SUPPORT

A formation of a Methodist congregation on Taylor’s Island was established as early as 1781, and the early members financed the construction of a sizable frame chapel in 1787 on land donated by Moses and Elizabeth LeCompte.¹ The church trustees, Benjamin Keene, Jr., William Geoghegan, Thomas Hooper, John Ashcom Travers, Peter Harrington, John Aaron, John Geoghegan, John Robson and Isaac Creighton, were charged with the “care and management of the Chapel lately built on Taylors for the use of the Ministers belonging to the Methodist Episcopal Church.” The 1787 chapel lasted the congregation for seventy years. In November 1856, several trustees, including Samuel Travers, Travers Staplefort, John H. McGuire, James Thompson, James Palmer, Solomon F. Kirwan and Levi D. Travers, met to assess the condition of the chapel and discuss the practicality of repairing the old building verses

¹ Dorchester County Land Record, NH 9/411, 15 September 1787, Dorchester County Courthouse, Cambridge, Maryland.

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building a new structure. While it was thought that the old chapel could be repaired and made "a very comfortable, but it would require considerable work to make it so...& then it would not be a handsome house," and the committee opted for the preference of building a new church on a piece of ground across the road that was offered by Samuel Travers. A building committee was then formed which included Samuel Travers, chairman; Samuel M. Travers, treasurer and solicitor of subscriptions; Travers Staplefort, Solomon F. Kirwan, William M. Cator, William D. Travers, and Levi D. Travers, secretary.² With the death of William D. Travers shortly afterwards, Dr Washington A. Smith was substituted in his place. Instead of looking to local resources and talent for the design and construction of their new church, the committee turned to Baltimore and retained the services of Architect/builders Harman & North. The old church was sold to Levi D. Travers, who moved the old chapel off site and converted it into a barn. By contract with Harman & North, the construction of the 35 x 50 brick church cost \$2,598.18, while additional expenses such as interior frescoing, furniture, shipping, etc. raising the total to \$3,245.12. Most of the funds were raised from those living on Taylor's Island, but additional support was provided from individuals living off the island in Dorchester County or in Baltimore City.³ Secretary Levi D. Travers stated in a summary of the project, printed in the Cambridge Herald in November 1858,

Much gratitude is felt, and many thanks are due Capt. Samuel M. Travers (a member of the building committee) for the most noble and generous part he took in this laudable enterprise. We deem it proper to state that it was mainly through his untiring zeal and influence, with his large circle of acquaintances, that we were able to erect so handsome and commodious a house of worship; also, much thanks are due to other members of the building committee, (as Capt Wm W. Cator and Dr. Washington A. Smith) not only for their liberal contributions, but for their efficient services in the discharge of the trust committed to them by the church as members of the building committee.

Within three years of the completion of their sophisticated new church, the Bethlehem congregation addressed the volatile issues surrounding the Civil War, the most of explosive of them was slavery. Methodists had been divided sharply on issues surrounding the slave ownership during the ante-bellum decades, so much so that a Methodist Episcopal Church South, which sanctioned slave holding by its membership, was established in 1844.⁴ As the years passed and a national conflict loomed with the dawn the 1860s, more and more congregations took sides, and the Bethlehem congregation aligned itself with the Methodist Episcopal Church South.

² Proceedings of the Board of Trustees of the Bethlehem M. E. Church, 17 November 1856, Edward H. Nabb Research Center for Delmarva History and Culture.

³ Reprinted article published in the *Cambridge Herald*, November 18, 1858, provided by John S. Neild, Jr.

⁴ Kirk Mariner, *Revival's Children: A Religious History of Virginia's Eastern Shore*, Salisbury, Maryland: Peninsula Press, 1979, p. 98.

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Dorchester County
Land Records

FJH 4/383

Samuel Travers and Mary Travers

to

2.23.1859

Trustees of Bethlehem Methodist Church

Lot across road from cemetery and original site of church

NH 9/411

Moses LeCompte and Elizabeth his wife

to

9.15.1787

Benjamin Keene, Jr., William Geoghegan, Thomas Hooper
John Ashcom Travers, Peter Harrington, John Aaron, John
Geoghegan, John Robson, Isaac Creighton,

½ acre 20 shillings "Patrick's Progress"

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D-24
Bethlehem Methodist Episcopal Church
Taylor's Island

Edward H. Nabb Research Center for Delmarva History and Culture
Salisbury University, Salisbury, Maryland

2001.04.01.01 Conference Minutes, 1860-1881

May 6, 1860

The Rev. Wm G. Cross, P. E., Washington District, Virginia Conference M. E. Church South, preached in Bethlehem Church Taylor's Island & formally received the members of said Church into the communion of the M. E. Church South & appointed Leaders to the classes as follows, James Thompson, Travers Staplefort, & Levi D. Travers & also appointed Saturday the 18th day of August next as the time for holding the first Quarterly Conference of Taylor's Island Station

August 18, 1860

According to previous Notice the Rev. Wm G. Cross, P.E., Virginia Conference of M. E. Church South met the Leaders and other members of Bethlehem M. E. Church, Taylor's Island in said church & after prayer proceeded to organize the Qr. Conf. of Taylor's Island Station, the following persons being nominated by the P. E. were elected by the leaders, Stewards of the Church viz. Solomon F. Kirwan, John H. McGuire, Joseph North, John H. Davis, Naboth Slacum, Amasa Thompson & Levi D. Travers. On Motion Levi D. Travers was elected recording Steward of the Church, Levi D. Travers was also recognized as a local preacher, character passed & licensed. Barzillia Lane, Col'd, was recognized as an Exorter & upon recommendation of the Leader was examined & recommended to preach.

Saturday, October 13, 1860

The Trustees having at their last meeting resolved to withdraw from the jurisdiction of the M. E. Church & place the church property under the jurisdiction of the "M. E. Church South" & having been formally received into said "Church" by the Rev. Wm G. Cross, P.E., of the Virginia Conf. now recognize the Bethlehem M. E. Church property on Taylor's Island, Md as under the jurisdiction of the M. E. Church South & themselves as members of the same.

The Trustees Estimate the Value of their Church property as follows:

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1 Brick Church for the whites, \$3,500.00
1 Frame Church for the Col'd People, \$400.00
\$3,900.00

Signed on behalf of the trustees, Geo. S. May, pastor
Levi D. Travers, Secretary

2001.04.03.01 Proceedings of the Board of Trustees, 1798-1860

Sabbath Morning, Feb. 15, 1860

...the primary object of the meeting being to determine wether (sic) the Trustees should withdraw the church property from the use of the M. E. Church & place it under the jurisdiction of the M. E. Church South—Levi D. Travers stated he was in favor of our immediate withdrawal from the M. E. Church & our connection with the M. E. Church South—it was a move we have for some time contemplated & had deferred it long enough as their was no probability that the M. E. Church would ever hush the agitation of slavery, and as our church was suffering materially on account of her connection with the M. E. Church, owing to the dissatisfaction of many of her members & the uprising of the people in our community against the church on account of having preachers from the Northern church, it seemed we could not prosper under such circumstances & he believed the good of the church demanded the proposed change. He believed that we should assume a decided position upon the question of slavery....it was either right or wrong to hold slaves....if wrong we should hold to the church we now belong & abandon slavery...if right we should hold on to our slaves & connect ourselves with a church that had no rules against it..

pp. 18-19 Resolutions in disassociation with the Methodist Episcopal Church—

p. 19Whereas we believe that the agitation of the question of slavery in the Church of God, especially in the Enactment of rules affecting the moral & legal rights of slaveholders (except such rules as relate to the respective duties of master & slave) is unauthorized by the word of God and at present destructive to the well being & security of the church & society, generally, and Whereas the M. E. Church is avowedly an antislavery church, looking to & laboring for, at least the gradual extirpation of slavery, and Whereas, we are citizens of a slaveholding state, members of a slave holding community & a large majority of the members of our Church being slaveholders & believing that slavery as it exists among us is justifiable & that it is far better for the colored population to be servants to us, than to remain free among us, and Whereas the M. E. Church South is confined chiefly to the Southern States & does not now meddle with the question of slavery (only in defense of her position) we are fully satisfied that it is proper & right for us (if not for the church generally in slaveholding territory) to withdraw from the M. E. Church & to conn[ect] ourselves with the M. E. Church South,

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Therefore, after careful deliberation with an honest purpose & desire to do the will of God & promote the welfare of his Church & the salvation of our souls, We now in the fear of God, do exercise the power delegated to us & Resolved that on or before the first day of April next, A.D. 1860 we will place our church property on Taylor's Island, Md, now in the use of the M. E. Church, in the jurisdiction of the M. E. Church South, Resolved, in taking this important step we entertain an humble sense, our dependency upon Almighty God, & that feeling grateful to him for past Christian privilellages (sic) & benefits, we still work for blessings to crown us in the future. Resolved that we withdraw from the M. E. Church & receive the ministry of another branch of the Church of God, we still retain a strong attachment and unshaken confidence in many of the ministers of the M. E. Church, men whose wish is to preach the Gospel of Christ with meddling with the vexed question of slavery & that we stall ere remember them in our prayers, welcome them to our homes & to our pulpits to receive the word of life, whenever they may visit us, Resolved, that a copy of these resolutions be sent to one of the Bishops of the M. E. Church South, to the Quarterly Conf. for Church Creek Circuit & to the Editors of the County newspapers for publication, after some discussion in which Bros. Kirwan, McGuire & others participated in these Resolutions were adopted without a dissenting vote—on motion the meeting adjourned after prayer by Levi D. Travers

Levi D. Travers, Secretary
Solomon F. Kirwan, President

1873 The following Trustees met at the house of Wm M. Travers. Solomon F. Kirwan, John H. McGuire, Travers Staplefort, Levi D. Travers, John H. Davis, Edwin L. Griffith, Rev. M. S. Colonna, pastor, was present & presided. Subscription was opened at once and some \$500 was pledged by the trustees....the appointment of suitable committee, the meeting adjourned...

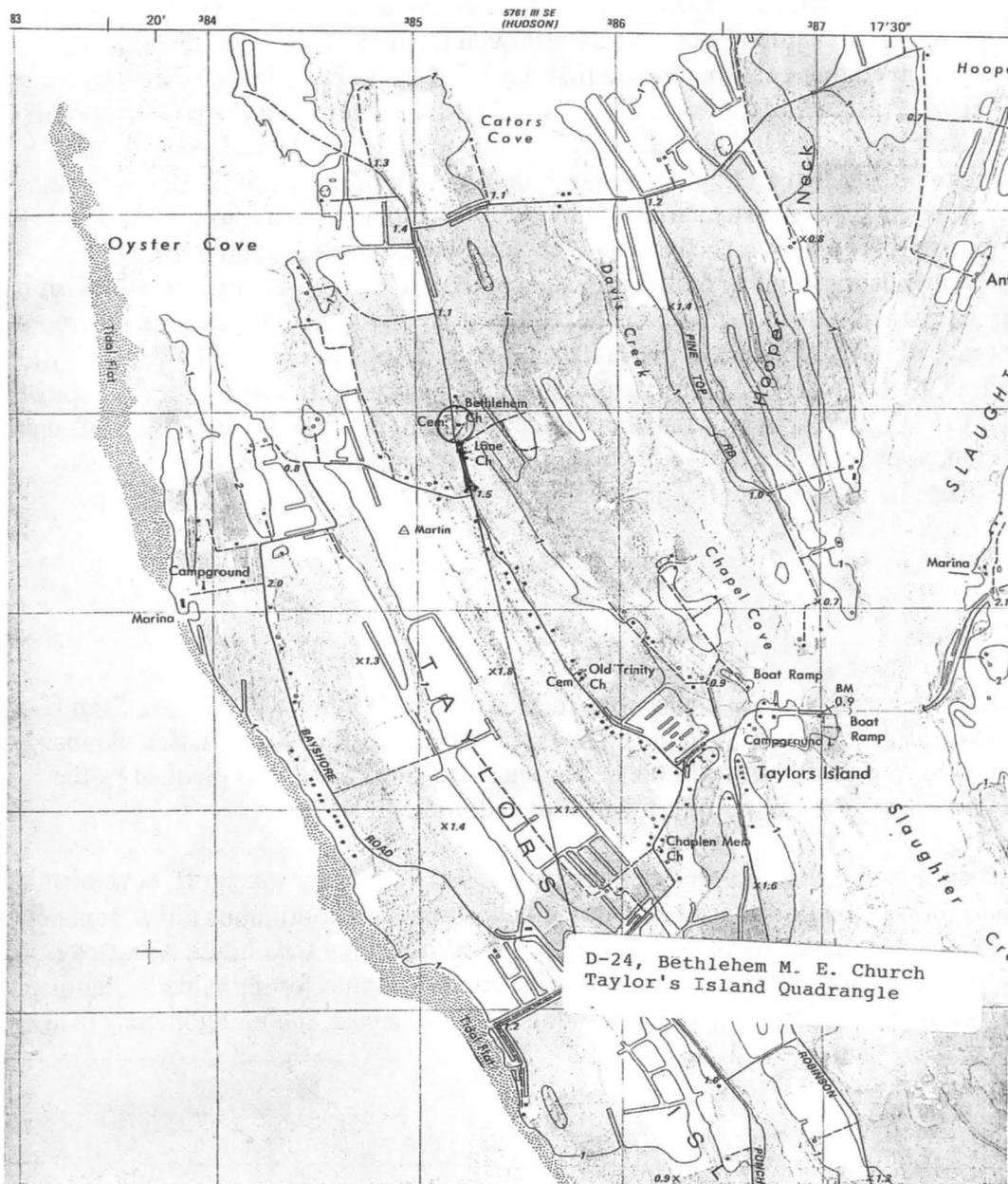
The following work was done to the church. The roof newly shingled. The floor taken off new joists put in of yellow pine hart (sic) & the floor raised one foot & new stairs with continuous rail & banister. The erection of Library room & refrescoing of the whole church, refurnishing the church with stoves, carpeting for the pulpit, gallery stairs, new lamps, chairs for the choir, Cushion for the bible, repainting & respouting of the church & new lightning rod, new window blinds at a cost, including interest paid on debt which was finally cancelled Jan. 7, 1876 of \$1903.53

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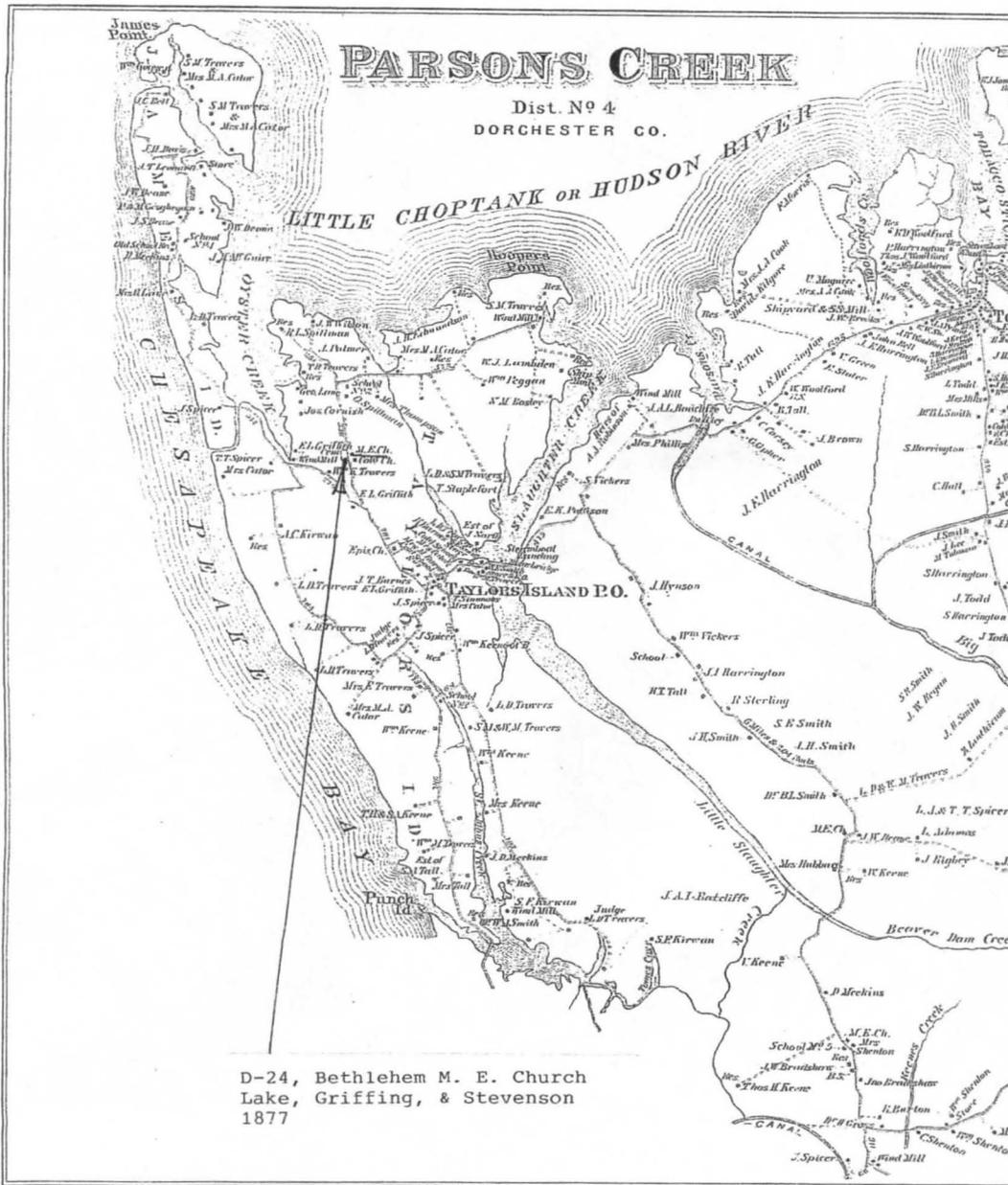


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9. Major Bibliographical References

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Dorchester County Land Records, various volumes, Dorchester County Courthouse.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of surveyed property 1/2 acre
Acreage of historical setting 1/2 acre
Quadrangle name Taylor's Island Quadrangle Quadrangle scale: 1:24,000

Verbal boundary description and justification

The metes and bounds of this property are coincidental with the current boundary of the lot.

11. Form Prepared by

name/title	Paul B. Touart, Architectural Historian		
organization	Chesapeake Country Heritage & Preservation	date	11/10/2010
street & number	Cedar Hill, P. O. Box 5	telephone	410-651-1094
city or town	Westover	state	Maryland 21871

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 21032-2023
410-514-7600



D-24, Bethlehem M. E. Church
Taylor's Island Quadrangle



D-24

BETHLEHEM M. E. CITIZENSHIP
TAYLOR'S ISLAND,

ROCKCASTLE Co. MD.
WEST ELEVATION

9. 2009, PAUL B. TOWANT,

PATRIOTIC
MUSEUM. HISTORICAL TRUST

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D. 24

Bethlehem M. E. Church

Taylor's Island,

Dorchester Co. Md.

ENTRANCE - WEST ELEV.

9. 2009, PAUL B. TOWANT,

PHOTOGRAPHER

REG. / MD. HIST. TRUST

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D. 24

BATHLETUM W. E. CHURCH
TAYLOR'S ISLAND, DORCHESTER
Co. MD.

STURGEON

9. 2009, PAUL B. TOWARD,
PITTSBURGH

NB2 / MD. HISTORICAL TRASS

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HYMNS
PSALM
71
77
222

HYMNS
PSALM
71
77
222

D. 24

~~BETWEEN~~ M. E. CUNNINGHAM

TAYLOR'S ISLAND, DORCHESTER CO., MD.

SANCTUARY FROM BALCONY

9. 2009, PAUL B. TOWNSEND, PITTSBURGH.

NELSON / AND. HISTORICAL TRUST

4 of 4

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC

Bethlehem Methodist Episcopal Church

AND/OR COMMON

Taylor's Island Methodist Church or Old Brick Church

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER East and west sides of Hoopers Neck Road, 1.8 miles from the bridge
to the mainland

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Taylor's Island

VICINITY OF

First

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

STATE

Maryland

CODE

24

COUNTY

Dorchester

CODE

019

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE <input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC ACQUISITION	<input type="checkbox"/> ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input type="checkbox"/> YES, RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES, UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Taylor's Island Methodist Church

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Taylor's Island

VICINITY OF

Maryland

STATE

21669

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Dorchester County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

High Street

CITY, TOWN

Cambridge

STATE

Maryland

21613

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

DATE

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Bethlehem M. E. Church or Old Brick Church is located on the east side of Hoopers Neck Road, two miles north of the bridge from Taylor's Island to the mainland. The brick structure sits very close to the road with the entrance gable facing west. Across the road is a very substantial cemetery dating from the middle of the 19th century.

The main facade (west gable end) of the church has a central entrance flanked by two windows with pilasters at the corners and a pediment over all. Each leaf of the double doors has two octagonal panels at the top and two at the bottom with two long octagonal panels in the center. Above the doors are two stationary elongated octagonal panels set back from the architrave, which is a rather simple facing with a very heavy cornice supported by brackets; below this cornice is a row of dentils. The two windows have 9/9 sash and cornices similar to that over the door. At the corners are brick pilasters with wooden capitals. Between these capitals and the pediment is a frieze with dentil molding. In the center of the pediment is a stone plaque reading: Bethlehem Methodist-Episcopal Church 1857.

At the apex of the roof in the front portion of the chapel is a square base with a wide, overhanging cornice supporting an octagonal belfry. Above this is an octagonal dome with a spire superimposed, making it look like an inverted ice cream cone. The spire is covered with copper, with a star at its apex.

The church is three bays deep, with three windows on each side with 9/9 sash and louvered shutters. Above each window is a recessed, semicircular arch. On each side of the building is a stepped brick cornice painted white to match the wood cornice across the front.

The front of the chapel is built of very smooth bricks laid in all stretcher bond with a very narrow mortar joint, while the rest of the building is constructed of common brick with a rather wide mortar joint in comparison to the front brickwork. At the rear of the building, as in most small Methodist chapels along the Eastern Shore, there is a small projection along the center of the gable. This is lighted by a 4/4 sash window on each side of the projection; there is no window in the back.

The interior is composed of an entrance hall with balcony above it and a large meeting room. The hall stretches across the front (west) end of the church and has a stair to the balcony in the northwest corner. Two double doors in the partition under the balcony lead to the meeting room. This partition is probably not original, but seems very early.

The meeting room retains the original pews divided by two aisles. There is a kerosene stove in the center of each side bank of pews. The projection described above from the exterior is just behind the altar. Some Victorian furniture remains in the church, in particular several benches behind the altar. The original organ, now electrified, sits in the southeast corner. A period kerosene fixture of five lamps hangs from the center of the ceiling; one kerosene lamp is attached to each of the surrounds on the east and center windows (the east ones have been electrified.)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

Bethlehem Methodist-Episcopal Church
Dorchester County

CONTINUATION SHEET Maryland ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 1

(DESCRIPTION, continued)

Early 20th century electric lights are also hung from the ceiling.

The balcony is supported by a single central column. There are recessed plastered arches above the large windows in both side walls.

SIGNIFICANCE

D-24

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW				
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> RELIGION	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)	
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION			

SPECIFIC DATES

1857

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

SIGNIFICANCE

Architecturally, Bethlehem Church is the best example of a mid-19th century Methodist chapel in Dorchester County. It is also the only one to be built of brick and retains its original interior, down to the kerosene lamps and chandelier. The building is a simple, well constructed structure typical of the mid-19th century in form and detail.

This site has been used by the Methodists since the 18th century and is the first site connected with this denomination in Dorchester County. The fact that Bethlehem was one of the Methodist churches to split from the main church during the schism over slavery reflects the general conservatism of the Eastern Shore at that time, as well as the belief in the plantation system in this particular area of the Shore.

HISTORY

The first chapel built on this site was donated by Moses and Elizabeth LeCompte. The deed granting the land and chapel to the trustees of the church is dated September 15, 1787, making it the oldest on record for Methodist Episcopal Church land in Dorchester County. The trustees at that time were Benjamin Keenes, Jr., William Geozhagan, Thomas Hooper, John Ashcom Travers, Peter Harrington, John Aaron, John Geogehan, John Robson, and Isaac Creighton. The deed reads that they are the "Trustees appointed to take the care and management of the Chapel lately built on Taylors for the use of the Ministers belonging to the Methodist Episcopal Church." (NH 9/411.)

The chapel was built on a half-acre of the tract Patricks Progress. The trustees were "to care for the chapel and at all times admit those appointed by yearly conference of Methodists in America to preach and expound God's word and for no other purpose."

According to E. C. Hallman's book, The Garden of Methodism, Bethlehem Methodist Episcopal Church was the first church built by the Methodists in Dorchester. The congregation organized in 1781 in Thomas Wollen's home and had their first chapel by 1787. This early building was sold when the present brick structure was built in 1857. The new church was "improved" in 1863 for \$900.

In 1860 the Methodist Episcopal Church divided over the slavery issue. The Peninsula Conference of the Church divided, and part went with the Baltimore Conference and part with the Virginia Conference. Sixteen charges on the Eastern Shore joined the Methodist Episcopal Church South and Bethlehem was one of them.

MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST WORKSHEET

NOMINATION FORM
for the
NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES, NATIONAL PARKS SERVICE

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

1. NAME

COMMON:
Bethlehem Methodist-Episcopal Church
AND/OR HISTORIC:
Taylor's Island Methodist Church or Old Brick Church

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:
Hoopers Neck Road
CITY OR TOWN:
Taylor's Island
STATE: Maryland COUNTY: Dorchester

3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)		OWNERSHIP		STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building	<input type="checkbox"/> Public	Public Acquisition:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied	Yes:
<input type="checkbox"/> Site	<input type="checkbox"/> Structure	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private	<input type="checkbox"/> In Process	<input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> Restricted
<input type="checkbox"/> Object	<input type="checkbox"/> Both		<input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered	<input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted
<input type="checkbox"/> No					
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)					
<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural	<input type="checkbox"/> Government	<input type="checkbox"/> Park	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation	<input type="checkbox"/> Comments	
<input type="checkbox"/> Commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> Industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify)	_____	
<input type="checkbox"/> Educational	<input type="checkbox"/> Military	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Religious	_____	_____	
<input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	_____	_____	

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME:
Taylor's Island Methodist Church
STREET AND NUMBER:
CITY OR TOWN: Taylor's Island STATE: Maryland ZIP: 21669

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC:
Dorchester County Courthouse
STREET AND NUMBER:
High Street
CITY OR TOWN: Cambridge STATE: Maryland ZIP: 21613
Title Reference of Current Deed (Book & Pg. #): 003/070, 117/152

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY:
DATE OF SURVEY: Federal State County Local
DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:
STREET AND NUMBER:
CITY OR TOWN: STATE:

7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input type="checkbox"/> Uncluttered	<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The church is a brick structure, its facade is composed of central entrance, the doors have two octagonal panels at the top of each leaf and two long octagonal panels in the center of each leaf. Above the doors are again two other elongated octagonal panels, this is set back from the architrave which is composed of a rather simple facing but above the door itself is a very heavy cornice supported by brackets. Between the brackets is a line of dentils. Flanking the entrance are two windows with 9/9 sash and with cornices similar to the door. At the corner of the building are brick pilasters with wooden capitals. Between the capitals and the pediment is a frieze with dentil molding. In the center of the pediment is a stone plaque bearing the following inscription: Bethlehem Methodist-Episcopal Church 1857

At the apex of the roof in the front portion of the chapel is a square base with a wide overhanging cornice supporting an octagonal bellfry which has for its spire an octagonal dome with a spire superimposed so that it looks like an inverted ice cream cone. It is covered with copper and at the apex of the spire is a star. The building is three bays deep, with three windows on each side having 9/9 sash and louvered shutters. The arch above the window is a simicircular arch, but the arch is filled in with brick. On each side there is a cornice of brick painted white to match the cornice of the front portion. The cornice along the sides is stepped brick only.

The front of the chapel is built of very smooth bricks laid in all stretcher bond with a very narrow mortar joint but the rest of the building is constructed of common brick with a rather wide mortar joint in comparison to the front brick work. At the rear of the building, like most small Methodist chapels along the Eastern Shore, there is a small projection along the center of the gable which is lighted by a 4/4 sash window on each side of the projection. There is no window in the back.

The interior, as seen from outside, looks as though it is composed of an entrance hall which has a stair leading up to the balcony in the north west corner of the facade. The facade is facing west. There is a partition under the balcony. On the other side is a large meeting room. It has a period hanging kerosene fixture probably from the 1880's hanging from the center of the ceiling. It also has some modern electric lights in the ceiling. The original pews seem to be in place. They are open pews and they are in four tiers, that is, there are two aisles. The partition between the entrance and meeting room is probably not original but seems very early.

Across the road from the church is a very substantial grave yard with early markers from the middle of the 19th century to the present.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

B. SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- Pre-Columbian
- 15th Century
- 16th Century
- 17th Century
- 18th Century
- 19th Century
- 20th Century

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known)

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- | | | | |
|--|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal | <input type="checkbox"/> Education | <input type="checkbox"/> Political | <input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry | <input type="checkbox"/> Science | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture | _____ |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature | <input type="checkbox"/> Theater | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commerce | <input type="checkbox"/> Military | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications | <input type="checkbox"/> Music | | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation | | | _____ |

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

MARKER:

Bethlehem Methodist-Episcopal Church

built in 1787 - rebuilt in 1857

The original chapel was built on this site which was donated by Moses and Elizabeth LeCompte. The deed dated September 15, 1787 is the oldest one on record for Methodist-Episcopal church land in Dorchester County. Both Bishop Francis Asbury and Reverend Freeborn Garrettson preached here. (The marker was placed by the Maryland Historical Society.)

Architecturally, Bethlehem Church is the best example of a mid-19th century Methodist chapel in Dorchester County and the only one to be built of brick. The church is also important because it is one of the earliest locations for the establishment of Methodism on the Eastern Shore.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Flowers, Thomas A., Dorchester Tercentenary, 1969.

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			O R	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds		Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds	
NW	° ' "	° ' "		° ' "	° ' "	
NE	° ' "	° ' "		° ' "	° ' "	
SE	° ' "	° ' "		° ' "	° ' "	
SW	° ' "	° ' "		° ' "	° ' "	

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY:

Acreage Justification:

2.4 acres
District 4, Tax Map 58, p. 91

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE:
Michael Bourne, Architectural Consultant

ORGANIZATION: Maryland Historical Trust DATE: April 1975

STREET AND NUMBER:
Shaw House, 21 State Circle

CITY OR TOWN: Annapolis STATE: Maryland 21401

12. State Liaison Officer Review: (Office Use Only)

Significance of this property is:
National State Local

Signature _____

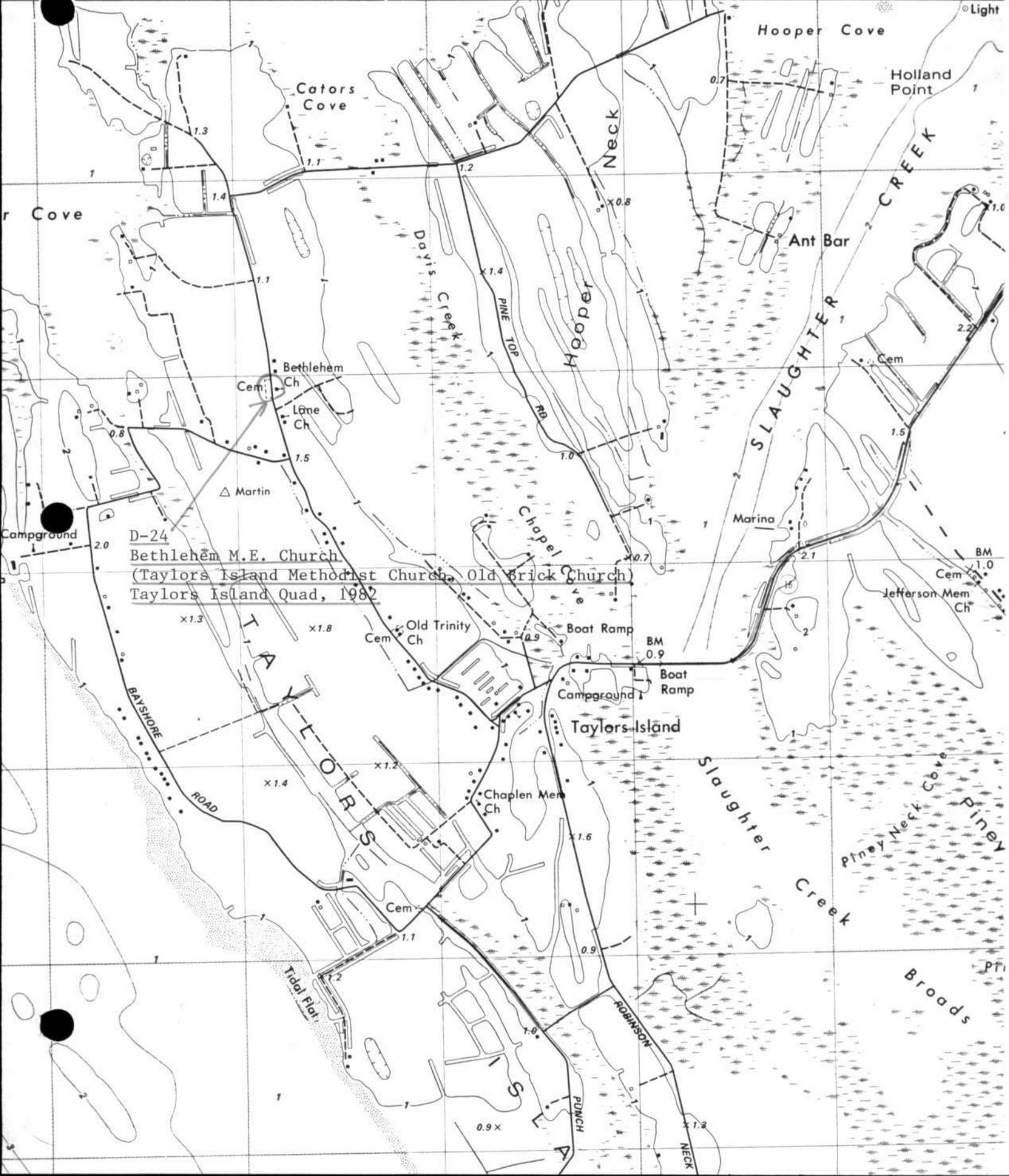
20'

(SHARPS ISLAND)

17'30"



384 385 5761 III SE (HUDSON) 386 387 17'30" 388



D-24
 Bethlehem M.E. Church
 (Taylor's Island Methodist Church, Old Brick Church)
 Taylor's Island Quad, 1982

K

.14 X 1.50

>I

D-24

A



2 SHOTS: Fig (5.5) @ 200% ← (D-24) @ 75%

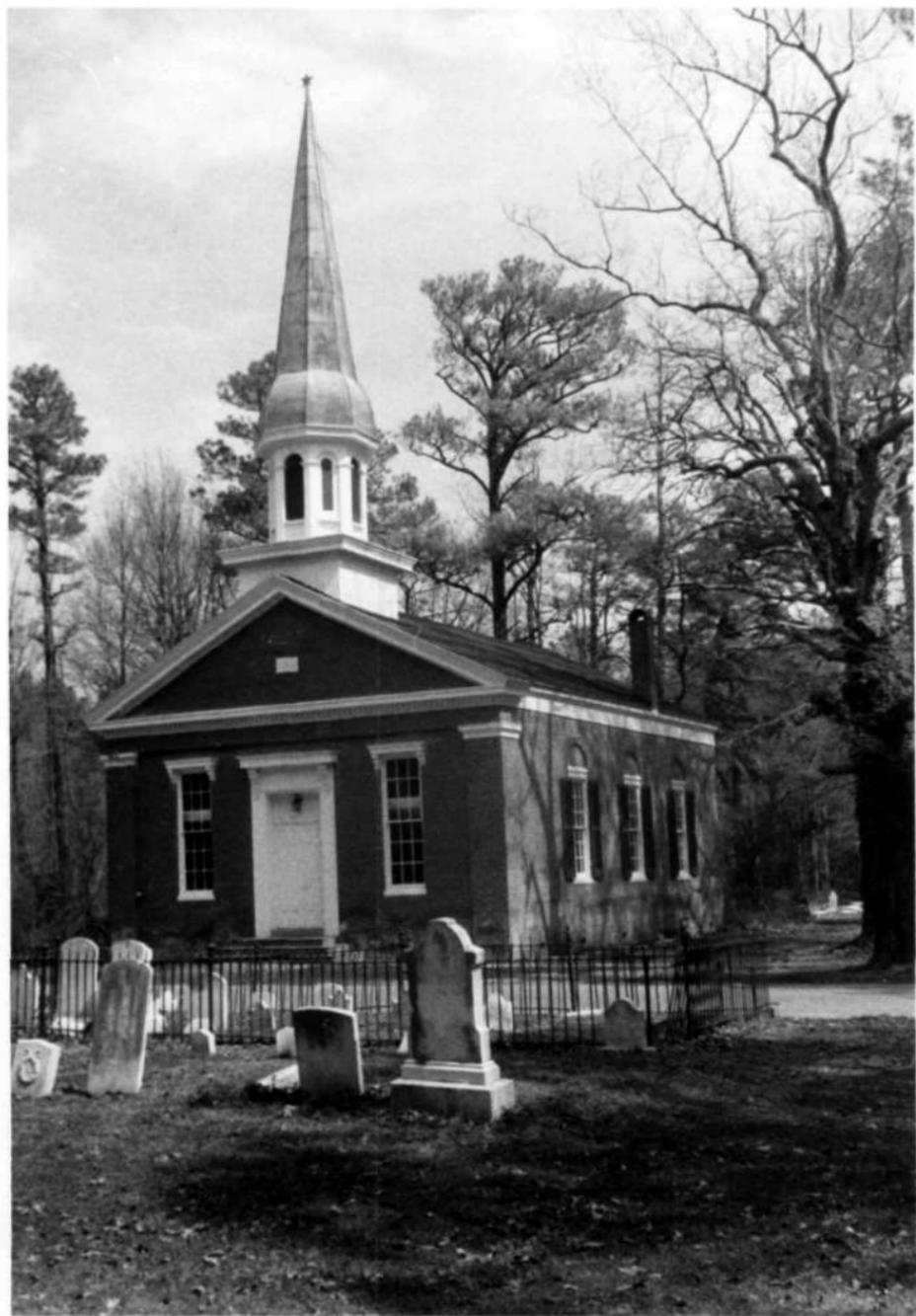
Y

Bethlehem Church

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M. Bourne Spring 1975



D-24