

HA-1844

West Liberty Methodist Church
Fallston Road
Fallston, MD

Moved to its present site and remodeled for use as a church in 1861, this simple frame structure provided a religious, educational, and civic center for six generations of African Americans in northwest Harford County. The building measures two bays by one (with a one-bay apse to the west) beneath a gable roof.

Regular church services ceased here in the 1980s (there is an annual Memorial Day service) but the building remains essentially intact and unchanged from its 1860s appearance.

Maryland Historical Trust

Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. HA-1844

1. Name of Property

historic West Liberty Methodist Church

other _____

2. Location

street and number Fallston Road not for publication

city, town Fallston X vicinity

county Harford

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

name West Liberty Methodist Church c/o Mrs. Mary Harmon

street and number 2642 Hess Road telephone 410/692-6936

city, town Fallston state MD zip code 21047

4. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Harford County Courthouse liber ALJ 64 folio 191

city, town Bel Air tax map 39 tax parcel 314 tax ID number 04 072707

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: Historical Society of Harford County

6. Classification

Category	Ownership	Current Function	Resource Count	
			Contributing	Noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape	<input type="checkbox"/> buildings
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce/trade	<input type="checkbox"/> recreation/culture	<input type="checkbox"/> sites
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> defense	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> religion	<input type="checkbox"/> structures
<input type="checkbox"/> site		<input type="checkbox"/> domestic	<input type="checkbox"/> social	<input type="checkbox"/> objects
<input type="checkbox"/> object		<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation	<input type="checkbox"/> Total
		<input type="checkbox"/> funerary	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	
		<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:	
			Number of Contributing Resources previously listed in the Inventory	

7. Description

Inventory No. HA-1844

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.

SUMMARY PARAGRAPH

The West Liberty Methodist Church is a simple frame structure. Sheathed in its original German siding, the building rests on uncoursed fieldstone foundations, with a small datestone at the northwest corner. Two bays long and one wide, the Church measures approximately 30'x15'; its simple panel door faces east.

A one-bay apse extends from the west façade. The gable roof is covered in corrugated metal. There is a small brick chimney in the center of the south façade.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

The Church was built as a store in Upper Cross Roads. The building was donated to the congregation in 1861, moved to its present site, and converted for religious use; the apse was built then.

The single room is heated by a wood stove. The whitewashed plaster walls have tongue and groove wainscoting to a height of approximately four feet. There is a center aisle with six (original) pews to each side. Toward the apse, two additional pews, to the north, are placed to face the center of the room; a 19th century piano is to the south.

The apse, on a slight dais, contains two chairs, the pulpit, altar, and lectern, all dating to 1861.

8. Significance

Inventory No. HA-1844

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 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	1861	Architect/Builder	Unknown
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Construction dates

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

The West Liberty Methodist Church is significant as one of the very few surviving buildings associated with the African-American community in this section of Harford County. The church, and its surrounding cemetery, have served the spiritual needs of the community continuously since 1861, and has acted as a focus for African-Americans through its use as a school and general meeting place.

GENERAL HISTORY

Located in the rapidly developing community of Fallston in northwestern Harford County, the West Liberty Methodist Church is the last vestige of a disappearing rural, African-American presence in a neighborhood that is now almost white, upper middle class, and suburban. Free Blacks have owned land in this once rural open space since the early 19th century. Some worked as laborers on the large grain and dairy farms that once characterized the Fallston-Upper Cross Roads neighborhood; some worked at the nearby Sarah Furnace, which flourished c. 1810-1870; many worked at the active lime quarry near the corner of Hess Road and Jarrettsville Pike.

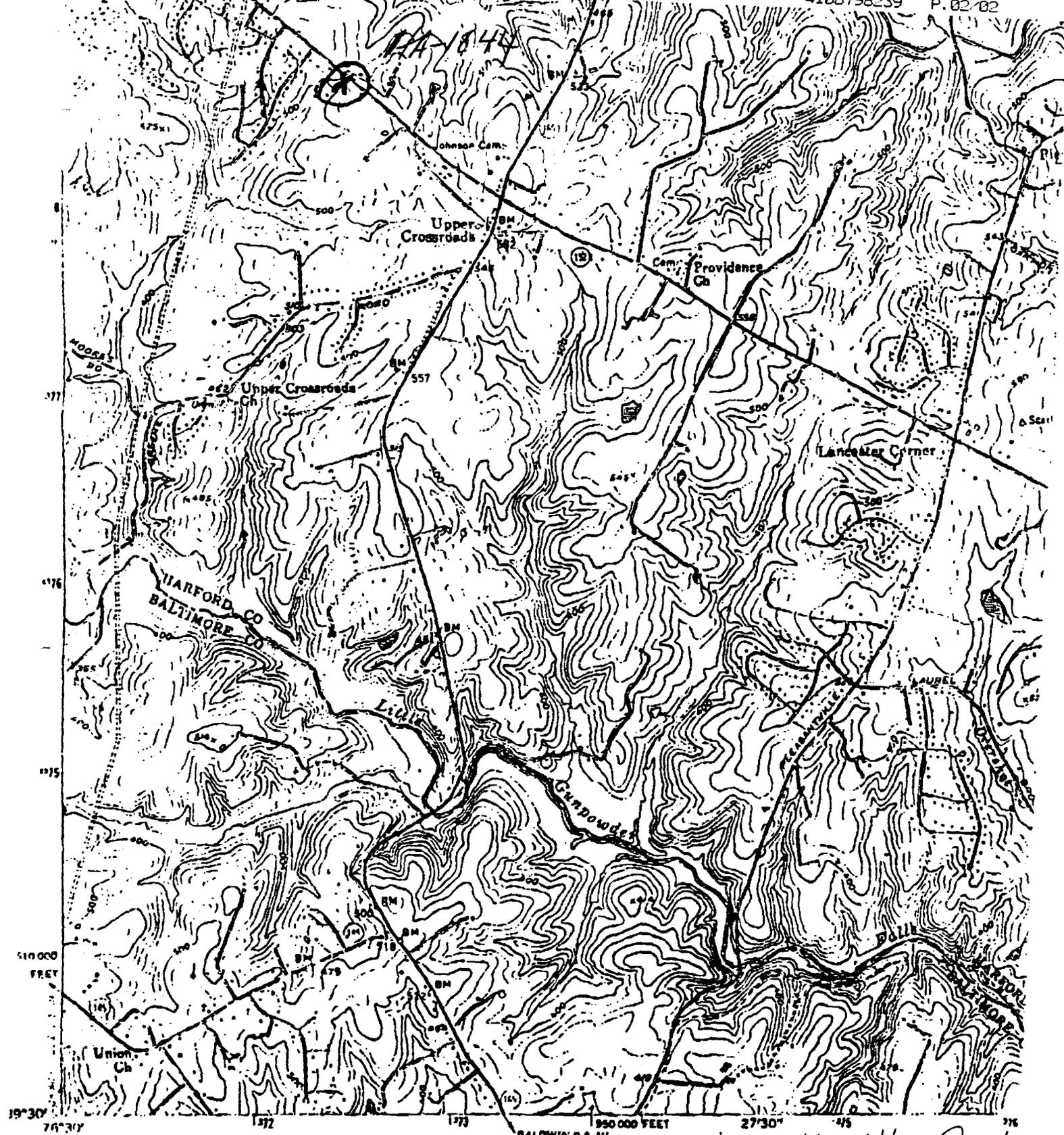
The African-American community lacked a physical focus. This was met however in 1861 when shopkeepers John Gurrey at Upper Cross Roads donated an abandoned frame store to the Trustees of the newly formed West Liberty Methodist Church. The Trustees then bought one tract acre of land from Emmor and Mary Woodward "for use of the congregation and meeting of colored persons of the Methodist Episcopal Church in Harford County." They then arranged to have the frame structure moved (hauled by oxen) from Upper Cross Roads, a distance of approximately one mile, and re-erected on its present site.

As the church's centennial booklet notes, "this frame building has stood for one hundred years serving a three-fold purpose: a place of worship, a school, and a community center." It served as an elementary school for African-Americans until 1922, when a new school was built a few miles north. (Harford County Schools remained legally segregated until the 1960s.)

As a community center, the building was used for socials and community meetings. As a church, it served as a setting for worship, christenings, marriages, and burials for six generations of local African-Americans.

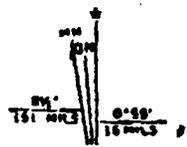
But beginning in the 1960s, the make up of the Fallston-Upper Cross Roads began to change as farms were bought for development. The African-American community began to be forced out and the church's congregation dwindled to the point where there were not enough members to support the church. Regular service ceased in 1986 and the parish merged with St. James United Methodist Church in Jarrettsville. The church, open only for an annual Memorial Day service, stands today, in the words of the *Baltimore Sun*, "still intact, an anomaly among upscale Fallston homes."

NA 1848



Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey
 Control by USGS, USC&GS, and USCE
 Topography from aerial photographs by multiple methods
 Aerial photographs taken 1954. Field check 1956
 Polyconic projection. 1927 North American datum
 ... coordinate system

Jarrettsville Quad.



Jarrettsville **MD**
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