HA-250

Spesutia Vestry House (St. George's Parish Vestry House)

Architectural Survey File

This is the architectural survey file for this MIHP record. The survey file is organized reverse-chronological (that is, with the latest material on top). It contains all MIHP inventory forms, National Register nomination forms, determinations of eligibility (DOE) forms, and accompanying documentation such as photographs and maps.

Users should be aware that additional undigitized material about this property may be found in on-site architectural reports, copies of HABS/HAER or other documentation, drawings, and the “vertical files” at the MHT Library in Crownsville. The vertical files may include newspaper clippings, field notes, draft versions of forms and architectural reports, photographs, maps, and drawings. Researchers who need a thorough understanding of this property should plan to visit the MHT Library as part of their research project; look at the MHT web site (mht.maryland.gov) for details about how to make an appointment.

All material is property of the Maryland Historical Trust.

_Last Updated: 02-18-2004_
1. NAME

Vestry House, St. George's Parish

2. LOCATION

1522 Perryman Road

CITY OR TOWN: Perryman

STATE: Maryland

3. CLASSIFICATION

CITY OR TOWN: First

CODE: 24

COUNTY: Harford

CODE: 025

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

FARMER'S NAME: St. George's Parish

STREET AND NUMBER: 1522 Perryman Road, P. O. Box 22

CITY OR TOWN: Perryman

STATE: Maryland

CODE: 24

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.: Clerk of the Court of Harford County

STREET AND NUMBER: 45 South Main Street

CITY OR TOWN: Bel Air

STATE: Maryland

CODE: 24

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITHE OF SURVEY:

DATE OF SURVEY: [ ] Federal [ ] State [ ] County [ ] Local

DEPARTMENT FOR SURVEY RECORDS:

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN:

STATE:

CODE:
The original specification for the Vestry House is an excellent description of the present building.

'At the Vestry Held for St. George's Parish on Tuesday the 10th Day of June 1766... The Vestry Proceeds to business...

The Vestry Agrees that there Shall be a New Vestry House built at St. George's Parish Church: According the following Dimentions Viz: To Be Built Twenty foot Long by Sixteen foot wide in the Clear. The foundation to be Sunk Eighteen Inches in the Ground & Rais'd Eighteen Inches above Ground before the Sleepers are Let Down & Sleepers all to be of Good Sound White Oak. Eight Inches Square & Between the floor and Ceiling Eight foot. The wall to be Two Brick & half Thick to the Sleepers from the Sleepers to the Square. Two Brick Thick The Gave Ends to be one Brick & half Thick to the Square from the Square to the Top one Brick Thick. The Work before mention'd to be done with Sufficient Lime Morter & Sand the Roof to have Eighteen Inches over Jet & the Joist to be of good Sound White Oak Seven Inches by four--& Proper Rafters for ye Same & to be Cover'd with Cypress Shingles & to Show Six Inches & the Shingles to be Round'd. The Under floor to be of good Quart'd pine Plank one Inch & half Thick. The Ceiling to be Lath'd & plaster'd & the Door to be in the South Gave End with Sufficient Lock & Hinges. The house to have a Corner Chimney well Support'd With a half inch & half Quarter Bar of Iron. the Chimney to be four foot wide at the Back & to be properly fleer'd & the Jams to be Eighteen Inches Thick: from the floor to the Arch of the Chimney four foot & the Chimney to Extend four foot above the Roof of the House--To be Two Sash Windows on Each Side with Twelve Lights in Each Window the Glafs to be Eight Inches by Ten Wide. & Good Sufficient Window Shutters with Spring Bolts to the Same. The whole House to be Plaister'd & White wash'd. the Harth to be Laid with Brick Under the fire place & Round the fire place to be Laid with flag Stone that is now Lay'd in the old Vestry House.

The Vestry Adjourns till the 21st day of June by ten o'Clock'

One side--the west--received but one window because the corner fireplace occupies part of that wall

Exterior walls are of Flemish bond, with closers and occasional glazed headers; both gables appear to have been rebuilt, as they are of common bond, but probably of the original bricks. A slate roof has replaced the wooden shingles, and a rake overhang has been added. The unmoulded cornicework is probably of the twentieth century.
Vestry House, St. George's Parish

7. DESCRIPTION, continued.

Rafters appear to date from the late nineteenth or early twentieth century, but the collar beams are original. Ceiling joists are original. The floor structure has been replaced with concrete.

Interior walls are plastered over sawn lathe, applied to furring strips; original plaster and nailing blocks behind the later finish indicates a chair rail at sill height. The original mantel no longer exists and the fireplace has been reduced in size. The door is of vertical beaded boards, with battens attached by wood screws, probably dating from the nineteenth century.

A restoration program is in progress to restore, authentically, missing elements, including the wooden floor, baseboard and chair rail, and mantel surrounding a fireplace restored to its original size. Adequate electric service, and electric heat, will be introduced. A later phase will restore exterior features, including roofing and cornice work, door and door frame, windows and shutters.

St. George's Parish Church, which the Vestry House was built to accompany, was constructed in 1759-1760, and was the third church to occupy this site. The present building, called Spesutia Church, was designed by Niernsee and Nelson, architects in Baltimore, and built in 1851. It is the fourth church on the site. Vestry records indicate that it stands on the foundations of and incorporates bricks from the third church, but it is not known whether or not the present walls, above ground, incorporate standing sections of the eighteenth century walls.

Designed in the Italian Romanesque style, Spesutia Church is of four bays with a chancel at its east end of one bay plus a semi-octagonal apse. In the second bay from the west end, on the south side, is a small entrance porch and at the northwest corner is an external tower of three stories, the top one being octagonal with louvres on each side; above is a short concave spire.

The buttressed brick walls are stuccoed, scored in imitation of ashlar. A single window in each bay is a tall round headed lancet, filled with small square quarrels set diagonally in wood muntins. Most of the clear glass is original. The three windows of the apse are filled with distinguished contemporary glass designed by Paul Barchowsky, an artist in the parish.

The low-pitched roofs are covered with slate and the generous eave and rake overhangs are supported by wood brackets.

(See continuation sheet No. 2)
7. DESCRIPTION, continued

The roof trusses are exposed, internally, and the walls are plastered. A large round headed arch separates the chancel from the nave and a gallery, one bay deep, extends across the west end, accessible from a stair within the tower.

Vestry records indicate that the church is on the foundations of, and incorporates bricks from the third church, constructed in 1759-60. Whether the present walls, above ground, incorporate standing sections of the eighteenth century walls is not known. Christ Church, Accokeek in Prince George's County, has had a similar building history; although its style was changed drastically in the nineteenth century, to one not unlike Spesutia, the majority of its walls date from the previous century.

The large cemetery which surrounds Spesutia Church, its colonial Vestry House, and its twentieth century Parish House, was established in 1718, when the Parish's second church was established in the present location. The third church was erected in 1759-60 immediately north of the second, which was then demolished. The fourth or present church was built upon the foundations of the third, in 1851.

The cemetery has many eighteenth century tombstones, and is the largest one of this period in the county. Continuing in use to this day, it has many nineteenth and twentieth century tombstones as well, exhibiting the full range of that art.

Several notable trees are interspersed among the graves, and the entire site is well shaded.

Many eighteenth and nineteenth century stones are known to have been moved to this parish cemetery from private cemeteries, mostly from the nearby Aberdeen Proving Ground and Edgewood Arsenal.
4. SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)
- [ ] Pre-Columbian
- [ ] 16th Century
- [ ] 18th Century
- [ ] 19th Century
- [ ] 20th Century

SPECIFIC DATES (If Applicable and Known) 1786

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)
- [ ] Aboriginal
- [ ] Prehistoric
- [ ] Historic
- [ ] Agriculture
- [ ] Architecture
- [ ] Art
- [ ] Commerce
- [ ] Communications
- [ ] Conservation
- [ ] Education
- [ ] Engineering
- [ ] Industry
- [ ] Invention
- [ ] Landscape
- [ ] Literature
- [ ] Military
- [ ] Music
- [ ] Political
- [ ] Religion/Phil.
- [ ] Science
- [ ] Sculpture
- [ ] Social/Humanitarian
- [ ] Theater
- [ ] Transportation
- [ ] Urban Planning
- [ ] Other (Specify)

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

In colonial Maryland, Church of England parish Vestries usually authorized a special building for use as a meeting place to conduct parish business and to perform certain civil duties (as trustees of the government-supported church), particularly the monitoring of the moral codes of the day and the administering of justice for violations. Vestry Houses were often used as schoolhouses, school being conducted by the clergyman or a member of his family, or someone else hired by the parish for the purpose. Vestries often replaced their Vestry Houses, as they did their churches, during the colonial period.

With the disestablishment of a state religion at the time of the American Revolution, Vestries no longer officially monitored their community's morals, but they did continue to function as the governing boards of their parishes, and they presumably conducted their meeting in their Vestry Houses. Vestry Houses continued to be used as schools. The Vestry Minutes, from time to time, name schoolmasters who kept school in the St. George's Parish Vestry House, including the years 1812 and 1821. Without governmental support, however, building maintenance became increasingly burdensome, and Vestries probably found it both more convenient and more economical to meet in private residences, and Vestry Houses gradually fall out of use. Only two have survived in Maryland--St George's and that of St. Paul's Parish, Kent County.

Not only is this Vestry House a rare survivor in the state of one type of building, it is a survivor of the eighteenth century, in an area with relatively few eighteenth century structures. As Harford was the last of the tidewater counties to be settled, it had fewer substantial eighteenth century structures than other tidewater counties, hence fewer have been considered good enough through the years to retain. The Vestry House shows that the workmanship and detail incorporated in such a small building was identical to that incorporated into larger, more impressive and more important structures. Finally, that such a small structure has survived without additions is unusual.

(See continuation sheet No. 3)
Vestry House, St. George's Parish

8. SIGNIFICANCE, continued

St. George's Parish has long recognized the historical value of their Vestry House, for in 1905, after apparent neglect, extensive repairs were undertaken, but the original character was not substantively altered. Appreciation for the antiquity of this structure continued, for a restoration program is in progress to restore, authentically, those parts lost or altered from the original.

The Vestry House stands in an extensive cemetery, established in 1738 when Spesutia Church, St. George's Parish, erected its second church there. The present church (the fourth) dates from 1851, designed in the Italian Romanesque style by Niernsee and Neilson, Architects of Baltimore, Maryland. It is on the foundation, and is the exact size, of the third church of 1738; its stuccoed walls are recorded as being constructed of materials from the third church. 3

Although the chief significance of this property is the rare eighteenth century Vestry House, the architects of the present church J. Craford Neilson (1816-1900) and John R. Niernsee (1831-1885). This team known as Niernsee and Neilson is responsible for major buildings in Baltimore in the 1850's: St. Luke's Church (National Register), Grace and St. Peter's Church, two of the most prominent residences on Mount Vernon Place (National Historic Landmark), Thomas--Jenks--Gladding and Walters Houses, and Camden Station. The Spesutia Church provides an exception to the firm's predilection for Gothic in the spirit of the ecclesiologists. (See: Phoebe Stanton. The Gothic Revival in American Church Architecture: An Episode in Taste,(Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1963).)
Major Bibliographical References

1. Nelson Waite Rightmyer, Maryland's Established Church, 1956.
2. Vestry Minutes, St. George's Parish
3. Ibid

Geographical Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Corner</th>
<th>Latitude</th>
<th>Longitude</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NW</td>
<td>0 0 0</td>
<td>0 0 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NE</td>
<td>0 0 0</td>
<td>0 0 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SE</td>
<td>0 0 0</td>
<td>0 0 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SW</td>
<td>0 0 0</td>
<td>0 0 0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Approximate Acreage of Nominated Property: 15 acres

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>County</th>
<th>Code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Form Prepared By

James Thomas Wollon, Jr., AIA

Harford County Committee, Maryland Historical Trust, July, 1974

State Liaison Officer Certification

As the designated State Liaison Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National [ ] State [ ] Local [ ]

Name
Orlando Ridout IV

Title
State Historic Preservation Officer

State Liaison Officer Certification

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

Director, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Attest:

Keeper of The National Register
## INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES**

**For NPS Use Only**

### FORM 10.300

**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR**

**NATIONAL PARK SERVICE**

**M. D. HISTORICAL TRUST**

**ANNEALIPSIIS, MD. 21404**

---

### 1. NAME

**COMMON:** Spencer Vestry

**AND/OR HISTORICAL:**

---

### 2. LOCATION

**STREET AND NUMBER:**

Northeast corner of Perryman Road (MD 57) and Spencer Church Road (MD 50)

**CITY OR TOWN:** Perryman

**STATE:** Maryland

---

### 3. CLASSIFICATION

**CATEGORY** (Check One)

- District
- Building
- Site
- Structure
- Object

**OWNERSHIP**

- Public
- Private
- Both

**OWNER OF PROPERTY**

**OWNERS NAME:** Vestry of St. George's

**STREET AND NUMBER:**

---

### 4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

**OWNERS NAME:** Vestry of St. George's

**STREET AND NUMBER:**

---

### 5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

**COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.**

**CLERK OF THE CIRCUIT COURT**

**STREET AND NUMBER:** HARFORD COUNTY COURTHOUSE 40 S. MAIN ST.

**CITY OR TOWN:** Bel Air

**STATE:** Maryland

**APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY:**

---

### 6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

**TITLE OF SURVEY:**

**DATE OF SURVEY:**

**DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:**

**STREET AND NUMBER:**

**CITY OR TOWN:**

**STATE:**

**FOR NPS USE ONLY**

---
**N. R. FIELD SHEET**

### 7. DESCRIPTION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONDITION</th>
<th>(Check One)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deteriorated</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ruins</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unexposed</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INTEGRITY</th>
<th>(Check One)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Altered</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unaltered</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moved</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Original Site</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance:

"Bud, one story, one room, two bays by one; facing west, the ridge-line runs east-west, windows 6/6."

SEE INSTRUCTIONS
STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE (Include Personages, Dates, Events, Etc.)

Built eighty years after the Third Speculative Church for the St. George's Parish, this simple wooden building remains because of its antiquity; its usefulness outmoded.
9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

WRIGHT, C. Multa, Our Maryland Heritage, p. 196.

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CORNER</th>
<th>LATITUDE</th>
<th>LONGITUDE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NW</td>
<td>0 0 0</td>
<td>0 0 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NE</td>
<td>0 0 0</td>
<td>0 0 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SE</td>
<td>0 0 0</td>
<td>0 0 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SW</td>
<td>0 0 0</td>
<td>0 0 0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN ONE ACRE

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATE</th>
<th>CODE</th>
<th>COUNTY</th>
<th>CODE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

11. FORM PREPARED BY

JEAN S. EWING
MARYLAND HISTORIC TRUST

ORGANIZATION: MARYLAND HISTORIC TRUST

STREET AND NUMBER: 50 STATE CIRCLE

CITY OR TOWN: ANNAPOLIS

STATE: MARYLAND

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION

As the designated State Liaison Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National [ ] State [ ] Local [ ]

Name

Title

Date

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date

ATTEST:

Keeper of The National Register

Date
Vestry House, St. Georges Parish HA-250
Perryman, MD
Susan M. Deeney 9/1/76
Southwest