HA-49

Thomas Run Church (Watters Meeting 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
Watters Meeting House

Thomas Run Church (preferred)

South side of Old County Road (abandoned)
near Thomas Run Road

Bel Air
Bel Air
Bel Air
Bel Air

Maryland
Maryland
Maryland
Maryland

24
24
24
24

025
025
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025

AGRICULTURE
COMMERCIAL
EDUCATIONAL
ENTERTAINMENT
GOVERNMENT
INDUSTRIAL
MILITARY
OTHER:

AGRICULTURE
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EDUCATIONAL
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MILITARY
OTHER:
The Watters Meeting House, or Thomas Run Church, is a one-story, rubble stone, three-bay church with a slate-covered gabled roof of moderate pitch.

The entrance is centered on the east end, and consists of a pair of two-paneled doors, the upper panel being arched, with a shallow three-light transom above. A simple Greek Revival molding finishes the exterior surface of the transom bar. Steps up to the door are of stone with slate treads, flanked by solid stone podia coped with slate.

Three twelve-over-twelve windows on each side and two similar windows flanking the pulpit in the west end, all with counterbalanced sash, light the church. Two six-over-six windows high in the east end light the gallery. A rectangular panel of plain granite, perhaps intended to display the name and date of the structure, decorates the east gable.

The east bay, which contains the gallery, is somewhat longer than the other two bays (and may actually be considered two bays); on the north side, close to the northeast corner, a former single-width door has been closed with rubble stone masonry. Traditionally, this was the direct access to the gallery stair, although there is no obvious evidence that the existing stair has been changed.

A simple Greek Revival crown molding decorates the eave and rake cornice, both of which extend over a foot beyond the stonework.

The floor is of random-width pine over straight-sawn joists (a few of which are visible through ventilating holes in the exterior side walls). The lower walls are covered with narrow beaded wainscoting, stained a dark brown; upper walls are plastered, with a furred space behind. The ceiling is covered with narrow beaded wainscoting, also stained a dark brown, with simple applied jig-sawn geometric decorations.

The east gallery is supported by two plain octagonal wood columns, and the solid gallery front is paneled with large, unmolded panels in a simple Greek Revival scheme. The stair rises from the northeast corner and a small storage closet is under the lower run of the staircase. The gallery floor is stepped with risers, and the plastered soffit slopes correspondingly. Early, open back pews are attached to the stepped floor, the risers forming most of the seat height. These pews may have been constructed to fit in this location, or they may have been sawed off conventional pews, placed here when later seating was installed in the church.

See continuation sheet #1
The fixed pulpit and pulpit platform are paneled with flat, unmolded panels, matching the gallery front. The platform is covered with 19th century ingrain carpeting.

The communion rail is composed of standard 19th century turned balusters with massive newels at each end, and wide walnut rail.

Seating units are of the late 19th or early 20th century, and consist of cast iron frames with decoratively-pierced bent plywood backs, and similar seats which can be raised; beneath each seat is a wire hat rack.

Hanging from the center of the ceiling is a cast iron chandelier with six coal oil lamps; a pair of two light wall sconces matching the chandelier flank the pulpit on the west wall, and a matching pair single light wall scones light the area beneath the gallery.

A small trap door, centered in the east end of the ceiling above the gallery, provides access to the attic. All roof and ceiling structure is visible in the attic, and is constructed of dimensional, straight sawn material, fastened with cut nails. Rafters are mitered at the ridge and terminate at the eaves on a flat plate board nailed to the top side of the ceiling joists; a collar beam is half-lapped and nailed into each pair of rafters, and a vertical cord extends from the roof peak to the ceiling joists, nailed to rafters, collar beam and joists. The stone gable walls are visible at each end of the attic. Random width roof sheathing is closed, for the slate roofing. No reused materials are in evidence, nor is there any evidence of alteration.
SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD

PREHISTORIC
XO-1499
1500-1599
1600-1699
1700-1799
1800-1899
1900-

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW

ARCHAEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC
ARCHAEOLOGY-HISTORIC
AGRICULTURE
ARCHITECTURE
ART
COMMERCE
COMMUNICATIONS

COMMUNITY PLANNING
CONSERVATION
ECONOMICS
EDUCATION
ENGINEERING
EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT
INDUSTRY
INVENTION

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE
LAW
LITERATURE
MILITARY
MUSIC
PHILOSOPHY
POLITICS/GOVERNMENT

RELIGION
SCIENCE
SCULPTURE
SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
THEATER
TRANSPORTATION
OTHER (SPECIFY)

SPECIFIC DATES

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The site of the Thomas Run Church, formerly known as the Watters Meeting House, was among the first used by the Methodists in colonial America. The structure standing on the site today is of interest for its architecture as well as for its associations with the history of Methodism in Maryland.

The general proportions of the church, including the roof pitch, suggest a typical, small, Greek Revival temple church, without the characteristic portico. It is similar in form to many other Methodist churches in Harford County, including Rock Run (dated 1843), Darlington and Mount Tabor, Calvary (dated 1821) exhibits both an earlier form and earlier detailing. There is no evidence of alteration to this church structure, which remains in excellent condition.

Methodism began in England when Charles and John Wesley (1703-1791) were fellows at Lincoln College, circa 1739. The United Society evolved from the Holy Club. Methodism spread from England to Ireland and from Ireland to America by way of an emigrant named Robert Strawbridge, in 1759 or 1760 (Dr. William Hamilton, Methodist Quarterly Review, July 1856). The first preaching house was built by him, circa 1764, at Sam's Creek, Frederick County, Maryland (Mrs. Arthur B. Bibbins, How Methodism Came: The Beginnings of Methodism in England and America, Baltimore; The American Methodist Historical Society of the Baltimore Annual Conference, 1945, p. 42).

There is some confusion as to the sequence of Methodist Societies in Maryland, but most historians agree that the meeting houses were established in this order:

(1) Sam's, or Pipe Creek, Frederick County, circa 1764
(2) Bush Forest, near Aberdeen, Harford County, circa 1769
(4) Watters (later Thomas Run), built by 1772
(5) Fork, 1773
(6) Gunpowder, 1773

The Watters family is credited by Methodist historians as being

See continuation sheet #2
influential in the forming of the Deer Creek Society which became Watters Meeting House or Thomas Run Church. Of the seven Watters brothers, three became ministers. The best known of these was William who was born October 16, 1751, at the Henry Watters homestead in Thomas Run. He was converted in 1771, becoming one of the first native itinerant preachers in America (Edwin Schell, *Those Incredible Methodists: A History of the Baltimore Conference of the United Methodist Church*, 1972, p. 14). He wrote "A Short Account of the Christian Experience and Ministerial Labors" which told of a conference held at Watters Meeting House on May 20th, 1777: "Our conference began at my eldest brother's preaching house, Deer Creek... It was a time much to be remembered" (William Watters, "A Short Account of the Christian Experience and Ministerial Labors of William Watters," Fairfax, 5/14/1806, p. 56). This conference was attended by Strawbridge and Bishop Francis Asbury. Asbury wrote in his journal: "We rode together to attend the conference at Deer Creek" (Asbury, p. 239). (Francis Asbury (1745-1816) was appointed by the British Conference of 1771 to work in America. A Wesleyan missionary, he became the chief organizer and molder of American Methodism. He also attended a powerful meeting at Henry Watters' near Deer Creek in November of 1772 (Bibbins, p. 56)).

The exact date of either the first building or the existing building at Thomas Run has not been established. A deed for the property, dated August 12, 1782, and recorded in the Harford County Land Records as JLG #E/4, mentions "all that lately erected house and tenement thereunto adjoining" and is for 314 acres, 28 perches. A second deed, dated July 11, 1871, ALJ #26/263, is a land addition of one acre, 17 perches, adjoining the old graveyard.

Until 1788 Watters Meeting House was a part of the Baltimore Circuit and was served by such able men as Asbury, Strawbridge, Webster, Wade, Watters, Garrettson and Ruff. Among those who served the Harford Circuit in 1817 were J. Toy and J. W. Bond; in 1820, J. Reed; in 1823, J. L. Gibbons; in 1826, D. B. Dorsey and 1844, T. T. Wysong (Circuit Records, Methodist Historical Society).

An act of the Maryland General Assembly passed during the January Session of 1868 provided for the incorporation of religious societies. In order to benefit from this law, the Trustees of Thomas Run M. E. See continuation sheet #3
Church of Harford County were incorporated on July 26, 1916. In later years, as the church grew, it was joined by Darlington M. E. Church and Rock Run M. E. Church to form a circuit known as the Darlington Methodist Charge. During the 1930's and 1940's, the community around the church changed and it was closed by the Baltimore Annual Conference.

The Thomas Run Church Foundation, Inc. was formed to restore and preserve the building and grounds as a place of historic interest. Services are held the last Sunday in May and September of each year. The church will be opened to interested groups upon request. The Foundation acquired the property on September 16, 1963, from the Baltimore Annual Conference of the M. E. Church (GRG 637/550).

a diary entry written by Mittie Munnikhuysen on Friday, June 25, 1858, she says, "I am now seated at the back window upstairs and have one of the loveliest views of the Valley of Thomas Run. As far as the eye can reach is seen a beautiful range of woodland and the hills on which it is look almost mountainous, and on the highest hill opposite is Mr. Watters' peaceful dwelling surrounded with many trees, close by, stands dear old Watters' Meeting House. It too is a lovely spot" (Munnikhuysen, Diaries of, Vol. I, Life in Maryland, 1858-1860, Louisiana State University Library, Baton Rouge, Louisiana).
GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 1.94 A

UTM REFERENCES

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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>D</td>
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VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The acreage nominated for the Thomas Run Church consists of the lot on which the church building is located and the adjoining cemetery, containing in all 1.94 acres and comprises all the land owned by the Thomas Run Foundation, Inc.

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>County</th>
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FORM PREPARED BY

Eleanor Greer Robinson/James T. Wollon, Jr., AIA

ORGANIZATION

Thomas Run Church Foundation

STREET & NUMBER

1301 Singer Road/Craig's Corner Road

CITY OR TOWN

Joppa/Havre de Grace

STATE

Maryland

STREET HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL ____ STATE X LOCAL ____

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-666), 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.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER
MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Harford County Land Records, Courthouse, Bel Air, Maryland.


1. NAME

COMMON: WATTERS RUN MEETING HOUSE

AND/OR HISTORIC:

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER: Lane enters north of Thomas Run Road, west of Kalmia Road

CITY OR TOWN: Harford

STATE: Maryland

3. CLASSIFICATION

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<th>Status</th>
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<tr>
<td>Site</td>
<td>In Process</td>
<td>Unoccupied</td>
<td>Restricted:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Structure</td>
<td>Being Considered</td>
<td>Preservation work in progress</td>
<td>Unrestricted:</td>
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PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- Agricultural
- Government
- Park
- Private Residence
- Religious
- Scientific
- Transportation
- Other (Specify): Museum

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNERS NAME: The Thomas Run Foundation, Inc.

STREET AND NUMBER: 70 MRS Blanche Pyle (Mrs. Lester Pyle)

CITY OR TOWN: Bel Air

STATE: Maryland

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

CLerk OF THE Circuit Court

STREET AND NUMBER: Harford County Court House 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: Bel Air

STATE: Maryland

CODE: 49

FOR NPS USE ONLY

ENTRY NUMBER

DATE

Color: 6885 - 6889
### 7. DESCRIPTION

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DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE.
### B. SIGNIFICANCE

#### PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)
- Pre-Columbian
- 16th Century
- 15th Century
- 17th Century
- 18th Century
- 19th Century
- 20th Century

#### SPECIFIC DATES (If Applicable and Known)
- C. 1782

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

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

Protected now by a private foundation, this church had been abandoned by the United Methodist Church (formerly the Baltimore Conference of Methodist Churches). When it was offered for sale in 1963, it had been unused for eighteen years as the congregation moved away or chose to a larger church. The foundation arranged three services a year in this place.

A log church building was built here in 1770. In 1782 the owner of the land, Henry Watters, and one John Bull arranged the gift of land to the American Methodist Church. The present building was built soon thereafter.
Wright, C. Milton, Our Harford Heritage, p. 423
Reverend Paul Grant—minister of Darlington Methodist Church—supplied the early history of this place.

Copy of articles of incorporation: files, N.H.T.

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY

<table>
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<td>SW</td>
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LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN ONE ACRE

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<th>LONGITUDE</th>
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LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE: _____ CODE: _____ COUNTY: _____
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STATE: _____ CODE: _____ COUNTY: _____
STATE: _____ CODE: _____ COUNTY: _____

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE: Jean S. Burt
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

ATTEST:

Keeper of The National Register

Date ____________________________

Date ____________________________
On a hill, with a view on three sides over Looking Towards Penn Valley, the small stone stuccoed church stands in a grove of oak and maple trees with a pine tree and several cedars.

One day, three, the entrance is in the east end wall, the ridge-line running east-west, with the altar on the west.

Three clear glass windows on each side have twelve over twelve sashes in simple frames. A small chimney rises from the north wall.

The grounds are simply arranged but well-kept in hardy planting - myrtle - and other evergreens. Predominantly turf - inside a stone ha-ha wall topped by slate, with slate steps at the gate and again at the door. Some nice sculpture is in the graveyard.

The present building replaced a log chapel built in 1778.