

K-51

Emmanuel Episcopal Church
High Street, Chestertown
1768-72

When Chestertown was laid out in 1706, it was within the area which made up St. Paul's Parish. How soon thereafter a chapel was built on the public lands of the Courthouse has not been definitely determined, but in 1720 a new Chapel of Ease was erected to replace the old one. By 1766, the county population had grown to such an extent that a group of people from both Shrewsbury and St. Paul's parishes petitioned the General Assembly for the creation of a new parish between the two old parishes that had been established in 1692.

In order to construct the new Parish Church, the inhabitants of both previous parishes were taxed 100,000 pounds of tobacco, with 80,000 pounds of tobacco to be collected as the work progressed. 130,000 pounds of tobacco were to be used for the new parish church and 50,000 pounds of tobacco were allocated to an addition to the Chapel of Ease in Chester Town.¹

The vestry and inhabitants of Chestertown, however, decided that a new church would better fill their needs.

“. . . and whereas upon inspection into the said Church, the Vestry and Inhabitants of Chester Town, and other the Parishioners are of Opinion, that the said sum of Tobacco will not be significant to make an Addition large Enough for the people, that the old parts will soon want large repairs and that therefore it will be better to Build a large new Chapple Intirely, if Money can be raised for its, making use of the Bricks and Materials of the old Church, as far as they will go, giving the proprietors of the Old Church,

seats in the new, as they had in the old, and allowing seats, also in the lower parts of the said Church, as it will be then much larger than the old one with such Addition, as could have been made of the Money. To such other persons, owners of lots in the said Town and not having pews in the old parts of said Building, and other Freeholders in the said Parish convenient to the said Church and contributing their Proportion to the cost of the said new pews, and as many well Disposed people will with a View to have the said Church large Commodious and Sufficient to hold the greatest parts of ye Parishioners, have Voluntarily Subscribed large sums of Money to be paid towards the Building the said Church, and it is thought that with the said Tobacco Raised by Act of Assembly, Money Subscribed, and the sale to the Highest Bidders of such pews exclusive of a Sufficient Common Gallery, that may be made in the Second Story of the Chapple to use of the Freeholders of the Parish as shall not have pews in the lower part of said Church may be built Two Story high and of good and large Dimensions, they therefore agree and enter on the same on the Register. That with the said Fifty Thousand Pounds of Tobacco the Materials of the Old Church, the Voluntary Subscriptions as Aforesaid and the payment of the Costs of Erecting the Pews in the lower floor as a good and Handsome Brisk Chapple Sixty Six Feet long and forty feet wide, two Story high with a Stone Foundation shall be built and Completed in Chester Town, and they Request Mr. William Ringgold to purchase Materials and Contracts with workmen to do the same in the Cheapest and best manner, and the Vestry will Confirm all such Contracts as you shall so make . . .”²

The above resolution in August was the result of the Vestry previously making arrangement with the Charles Tilden, builder of the Parish Church at I. U. to add fifteen feet and twelve pews onto the existing

chapel and advertising for workmen in "Jonas Green's Paper" (Maryland Gazette) (May 1767).

The next entry in the Vestry Minutes pertaining to the Chestertown "Chapple" is the distribution of the pews five years later, in August of 1772. Neither the contract with William Ringgold, nor the specifications were recorded as had been done at the Parish Church at I. U. The "Chapple" was, however, built as outlined in the Vestry resolution quoted above.

It was constructed upon a stone foundation and measured 66 feet long and 40 feet wide. Its five bay facade and three bay gables were laid in all header bond, the same bond as used on William Ringgold's residence and several other buildings in town, most notably Widehall, built in 1769. The central bay of the facade contained the principal entry which was located in a projecting pavilion and was embellished with a classical pedimented architrave.

From the 1860 Martinet Map, the church appears to have had the same size windows throughout, all with rusticated jack arches except for a Palladian window above the entry. At the corners of the building there were broad pilasters terminating at the cornice, the latter continuing around the gables to form full pediments. Even the minor entrances on the gables appear to have had classical architraves.

It would be fairly safe to assume that the interior was as well finished as the exterior. From the plans recorded in the Vestry Minutes, there were thirty-six pews on the ground floor and thirty-two in the three-sided balcony above. Stairs thereto were located in the north and east

corners, both having a pew beneath. The pulpit and altar were located in the center of the northeast facade. It had a barrel-vaulted plaster ceiling.³

In 1780, Dr. William Smith, rector of the Parish, called a meeting to convene at the Church in Chestertown at which the name "Protestant Episcopal Church of the United States of America" was officially adopted in place of the Anglican Church or the Church of England. This was done because of the ongoing war with England which was not to be resolved until 1783. Two years after this meeting, Dr. Smith initiated the formation of Washington College over which he presided until his return to Philadelphia in 1789.

In 1785 a group of inhabitants of Chestertown purchased an organ and it was to be placed in "the vacancy under the bellfry", i. e. pews Nos. 66-68. Vacant pews were offered to those who owned pews Nos. 66-68. To this extent Tobias Ashmore, who had received No. 68 from Joseph Garnett was assigned No. 53 in 1768.⁴

In 1800 the parish registrar recorded that the "Churches of the Parish are so out of repair and unprovided with stoves - they cannot be used during winter season . . . therefore Service will be held at Courthouse once a fortnight and Mr. Dashiell will not preach at I. U. Church til April next."⁵

With the steady decline in Church attendance and the rise of Methodism, I. U. Church became redundant and the parish church moved to Chestertown. This occurred during the tenure of Rev. William H. Wilmer around the year 1809.

The single most outstanding change to the Church prior to the major remodeling in the early 1880's was an interior decorating job around mid-century. Only a small amount of that paint remains on the gable above the existing ceiling. This treatment was not to last long as "the Vestry passed a resolution on May 4, 1880 approving a subscription to raise funds for the building's reconstruction using plans presented to the Vestry by the architect, J. C. Nielsen."⁶

Mr. Nielsen's plans changed the Georgian meeting house into a Romanesque chapel. His plans called for tall semi-circular headed windows in place of the old double hung sash, removal of the balcony and lowering the roof by twelve feet. This was done without disassembling the trussed structure. Nielsen reoriented the building by closing the High Street entry, building a sanctuary on the southeast gable and installing an entry/vestibule on the opposite end. The interior was then finished with stained dado, the walls plastered and the vaulted ceiling replaced with an 'A' shaped board ceiling. The old box pews were removed and replaced with walnut congregational pews. On the east side of the building, a small structure was built to house the new organ. It was during the dedication of the new Church that it was formally given the name, Emmanuel Church.

1905 saw the enhancement of the Romanesque design by the construction of a bell tower and adjoining Parish Hall. A larger parish hall was constructed in 1969. Throughout the period after the remodeling in 1880, minor changes have taken place inside and out, many of which are recorded in the History of Emmanuel Church, written by Fred W.

Dumschott in 1972.

In 190, the Vestry voted to raise funds for a new organ to replace the electronic one installed twenty years before. The committee formed to look into the issue recommended the installation of a tracker action pipe organ made by the firm of Harrison & Harrison of Durham, England. While preparing for its installation, termites were discovered throughout the 1880's floor system. In the process of reinstalling the floor system, the chancel and sanctuary were redesigned to conform to the Present Book of Common Prayer.

1. Dumschott, F., p. 5.
2. Vestry Minutes, 4 August 1767.
3. see Plan and Appendix for owners of pews.
4. Vestry Minutes, June 11, 1785; June 1786.
5. Vestry Minutes, Dec. 1800.
6. Dumschott, p. 13. Rev. Wilmer was one of the sons of Simon Wilmer (IV) (d. 1798) who owned Stepney adjoining town. He is known for establishing the Virginia Theological Seminary while presiding at St. Paul's Church, Alexandria, and later as the President of William and Mary while presiding at Bruton Parish Church, Williamsburg. One of his holdings was the White Swan Tavern (from 1814-1854).

Easement

K - 53 Emmanuel Episcopal Church

1772

Chestertown, Md.

Episcopal Church, open at certain times

Emmanuel Episcopal Church played an important part in the development of both Chestertown and the Episcopal religion. It was here, in 1780, under the direction of Dr. William Smith, then rector and President of Washington College, the Convention adopted the name Protestant Episcopal Church in America.

The present building is obviously an early one with Victorian embellishments and with information as to its original condition one can imagine how it did indeed look. As determined by the Chester Parish Vestry in 1767 the new church was to be 60' long and 40' wide, 2 stories, all header bond, with an interior balcony on 2nd floor level on 3 sides. One would enter at the High St. center of the facade and the pulpit was directly across from the entrance. The belfry was in the west end and windows were of clear glass. A total of 68 pews were available for rent. Presently one sees that the roof has been lowered by 12 feet, the 1st floor windows heightened with an arch at the top and stained glass windows installed, a recessed chancel built at the east end and a new entry at the west end. The present tower and small hall were done in 1905 and the larger Parish hall addition begun in 1968. The brick work and color in the old building and later additions are very different, with the original being of a softer hue and all header bond.

INVENTORY FORM FOR STATE HISTORIC SITES SURVEY

1 NAME

HISTORIC Emmanuel Episcopal Church
AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER High and Cross Sts.
CITY, TOWN Chestertown VICINITY OF First
STATE Md. COUNTY Kent

3 CLASSIFICATION

Table with 4 columns: CATEGORY, OWNERSHIP, STATUS, PRESENT USE. Includes options like DISTRICT, BUILDING(S), OCCUPIED, AGRICULTURE, etc.

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME Emmanuel Episcopal Church Telephone #: 778-3477
STREET & NUMBER High and Cross Sts.
CITY, TOWN Chestertown VICINITY OF Md. 21620

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Office of the Clerk
STREET & NUMBER Kent County Courthouse
CITY, TOWN Chestertown, Md.
Liber #: Provincial Council Folio #: of 1768 granted 90' on High St, 120' on Cross to erect this Church, see History of Emmanuel Church by Fred STATE Dumschott for specific references to Church records.

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE none known
DATE
DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS
CITY, TOWN STATE

7 DESCRIPTION

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CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" 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

The Chester Parish Vestry in 1767 voted to build a new Church to be 60' long and 40' wide, 2 stories, all header bond, with an interior balcony on 2nd floor level on 3 sides. One would enter at the center of the High St. facade and the pulpit was directly across from the entrance. The belfry was in the west end. Windows are of clear glass. There were 36 pews on the 1st floor and 32 in the balcony.

Emmanuel Church has been altered by redecorating and additions. It is obviously an early brick building with Victorian embellishments, and now stained glass windows.

In 1860 the Church Vestry notes mention the need to examine the roof.

In 1876 the Church Vestry notes mention they will repair ~~the~~ ^{the} roof and the vestibule. In 1878 the Church Vestry notes mention that the roof urgently needs repair. With plans by architect J. C. Nielsen, at a cost of estimated \$3,600, bids were submitted. A local builder, Horace M. Stewart was to make the changes and as of 3/18/81 \$4,600 was subscribed for the work. Mr. Stewart was to retain the old walls, lower the roof to the base of the upper windows (which he did without removing the roof at all), remove the balcony and increase the height of the lower windows with an arch at the top of each. The roof was lowered 12 feet. There was built a recessed chancel at the east end and a new entry at the west end. Pews and the pulpit were rearranged. The building was available for use as of 12/25/1881 and consecrated on 2/8/1882.

The present tower and small Parish Hall attached to it were begun in 12/1904 and all brick work done since the original building is in common bond. The tower and hall were completed 9/30/05 at a cost of \$6,148 by A.M. Culp, a local contractor.

Electric lights were added in 1898 and central heat in 1914.

The newest large Parish Hall was begun on 3/6/1968 and is considered by some to be done in a "Colonial manner".

8 SIGNIFICANCE

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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 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 type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input 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 1772

BUILDER/ARCHITECT unknown

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The significance of Emmanuel Episcopal Church is several. The land was granted for the building in 1768 by the Provincial Council, from the Court House lands.

Under the Rev. Dr. William Smith, President of Washington College, and rector of Emmanuel Church, at the Convention held at the Church, the title of the Protestant Episcopal Church in America was adopted in 1780.

The original building, even in its altered state, is interesting as one can visualize it as it was when built and the soft, unusual color of the bricks makes a pleasing contrast to other brick buildings. (F.G. Usilton in his History of Kent County refers to these bricks being brought from England..??)

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Emmanuel Episcopal Church 1772-1972 by Fred W. Dumschott
Chester Parish, Kent Co., Md.

Maryland - A Guide to the Old Line State, 1940, a WPA project

History of Kent County, Fred G. Usilton

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 90' x 120'

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

From corner, 90' easterly on High (or Park Row)
From corner, 120' northerly on Cross St. making a parallelogram
90' x 120'

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

STATE COUNTY

STATE COUNTY

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Kathleen B. White, Historic Site Surveyor

ORGANIZATION

Md. Historical Trust/City of Chestertown

DATE

Sept. 1976

STREET & NUMBER

TELEPHONE

CITY OR TOWN

STATE

The Maryland Historic Sites Inventory 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
The Shaw House, 21 State Circle
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
(301) 267-1438

Emmanuel Episcopal Church

Chester Parish was created in 1766 by the Provincial Council and included St. Pauls Church and Shrewsbury Church, both outside of Chestertown.

"For 1766 an assessment of 100,000 lbs. of tobacco was levied on all taxables in Kent County, to be paid to the Vestry of Chester Parish, with 80,000 lbs. to be added later" 130,000 of the total was to buy 20 acres near IU to erect a church there and the remaining 50,000 lbs. to be used for an addition to the Church in Chestertown.

At the Vestry meeting of 1767 it was decided not to enlarge the existing Church in Chestertown but to build a new one to be 60' long x 40' wide, 2 stories tall. The Provincial Council of 1768 granted permission for this and a portion of the Court House grounds, 90' on High St. and 120' on Cross St.

In 1770 360 lbs. of tobacco was subscribed to complete the Church and fence in the burial grounds.

K-51
Emmanuel Episcopal Church
Cross St. and Park Row
Chestertown
Chestertown Quad.
Kent County





K 51 Emmanuel Church

1/77 W+S



K58 Emmanuel Church

1/77 S + E