NPS Form 10-900
(Rev. Aug. 2002)

OMB Approval No. 1024-0018
(Expires Jan. 2005)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word process, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Tolson's Chapel

other names/site number WA-II-702

2. Location

street & number 111 E. High St. ☐ not for publication

city or town Sharpsburg ☐ vicinity

state Maryland code MD county Washington code 043 zip code 21782

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this ☒ nomination ☐ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property ☒ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant ☐ nationally ☐ statewide ☒ locally. (☐ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title — Date 9-10-08

State or Federal Agency or Tribal government

In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. (☐ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting official/Title — Date

State or Federal agency or bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

- ☐ entered in the National Register. ☐ See continuation sheet
- ☐ determined eligible for the National Register. ☐ See continuation sheet.
- ☐ determined not eligible for the National Register.
- ☐ removed from the National Register.
- ☐ other, (explain:)

Signature of the Keeper — Date of Action

Tolson's Chapel WA-II-702
Name of Property

Washington County, Maryland
County and State

Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- ☒ private
- ☐ public-local
- ☐ public-State
- ☐ public-Federal

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

- ☒ building(s)
- ☐ district
- ☐ site
- ☐ structure
- ☐ object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		buildings
1		sites
		structures
		objects
2	0	Total

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed In the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

RELIGION/religious facility

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

VACANT/not in use

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

OTHER: single log pen

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Stone
walls Asphalt, Wood
roof Metal
other Brick

Narrative Description
(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

Tolson's Chapel WA-II-702
Name of Property

Washington County, Maryland
County and State

Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria
(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- ☒ **A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- ☐ **B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☐ **C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☐ **D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations
(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- ☐ **A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- ● **B** removed from its original location.
- ☐ **C** a birthplace or grave.
- ☐ **D** a cemetery.
- ☐ **E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- ☐ **F** a commemorative property.
- ☐ **G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance
(Enter categories from instructions)

Ethnic Heritage/Black

Period of Significance

1866-1958

Significant Dates

1866; 1868-1870; 1899

Significant Person
(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

N/A

Narrative Statement of Significance
(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography
(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- ☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- ☐ previously listed in the National Register
- ☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
- ● designed a National Historic Landmark
- ☒ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # MD-1202
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #

Primary location of additional data:

- ☒ State Historic Preservation Office
- ☐ Other State agency
- ☐ Federal agency
- ☐ Local government
- ☐ University
- ☐ Other

Name of repository:

Tolson's Chapel WA-II-702
Name of Property

Washington County, Maryland
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Approx. ¼ acre

UTM References
(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
1	18	263670	4371007	3			
2				4			

☐ See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description
(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification
(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Edie Wallace, Historian; Dr. Paula S. Reed, Architectural Historian

organization Paula S. Reed & Associates, Inc. date 9/05; revised May 2008

street & number 1 W. Franklin St., Suite 300 telephone 301-739-2070

city or town Hagerstown state Maryland zip code 21782

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional items
(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name Friends of Tolson's Chapel

street & number P.O. Box 162 telephone

city or town Sharpsburg state Maryland zip code 21782

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et. seq.*). A federal agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB control number.

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to Keeper, National Register of Historic Places, 1849 "C" Street, N.W., Washington, DC 20240.

Physical Description

Tolson's Chapel, built in 1866, is a small gable front log building sited on the north side of East High Street along the east side of an alley. It is located in the southwest corner of the west half of Sharpsburg Lot 104[1]. The parcel measures approximately 52 feet 10 inches in width and 206 feet in depth. The bulk of the lot consists of the associated cemetery. The building is set back from High St. approximately 15 feet; there is a concrete sidewalk and a single concrete landing step to the front door of the church. In the grassy area in front of the sidewalk are two large tree stumps, remnants of the large trees that stood in front of the chapel until the 1990s when they were removed for safety. A concrete retaining wall lines the west boundary along the alley as far as the northwest corner of the building, with concrete steps incorporated at the south end leading up to the front sidewalk.

The cemetery covers the area of the west half of Lot 104 not covered by the chapel building. A chain link fence runs from the southeast corner of the building to the southeast corner of the chapel property, approximately 25 feet in length, which opens onto the northeast corner of the cemetery. The rest of the cemetery is bordered by the alley along the west, another alley along the north, and the property lines of the east half of Lot 104 marked by another chain link fence and a concrete block wall. The west and north alleys are bounded by a steep berm, with the alleys at a lower elevation than the cemetery. The cemetery is full; many graves are marked with marble, brass, or granite gravestones in varying states of preservation. There are several areas of multiple unmarked graves. The southeast corner of the cemetery immediately east of the chapel is designated for the Monroe family, who now have family plot in Hagerstown leaving this the only unused section of the cemetery. Photographs that were taken in 1988 show a double privy that was located near the northwest corner of the chapel building. The privy is no longer standing but its location is marked on the ground today by a flat sill or foundation stone. The landscape is grassy and there is one large maple tree near the center of the east boundary.

The Tolson's Chapel building is approximately 28 feet in length by 21 ½ feet in width. It is a single pen, corner post log structure on a limestone foundation. A sandstone cornerstone is located in the southwest corner of the foundation. It is beginning to decay with large flakes missing, however the remains of the inscription can still be mostly deciphered: "[TO]LSON'S CH[A]PEL." There is an indication of a date below the name but it cannot be deciphered. The heavy hewn logs are mortised into corner posts. Diagonal corner braces extend upward from the sill to the corner posts, making the building a hybrid log/braced frame structure. This construction method is relatively rare in Washington County, and is typically associated with a date in the third quarter of the 19th century. A summer beam runs the length of the building and is accessed via a crawlspace under the building.

The chapel has a single central entrance in the south gable end with a four-panel door and transom. The transom is infilled with tongue and groove horizontal boards. There is a small window

[1] This designation conforms to the system of numbering lots which followed Sharpsburg's establishment in 1764.

above the entrance in the gable peak that is also infilled with horizontal boards. The building has two bays on both the west and east elevations with six over six sash windows. The east elevation windows have paired exterior shutters of vertical boards with horizontal battens. Windows have a decorative shallow pointed top piece above the frame. Centered on the north gable end is a 4 foot deep by 8 ½ foot wide frame shed addition that forms the apse (alcove) of the church interior and a storage area below at the foundation level.

A brick exterior chimney rises between the two windows on the east elevation to approximately two feet above the eave, ending with a single corbelled row. The roof is covered with corrugated metal sheets. A patch at the roof peak on the south gable end marks the location of the bell cupola, removed ca.1980 due to the poor condition of the wood.

The exterior walls of the chapel are covered with red asphalt roofing shingles with occasional patches of different colors. The siding under the shingles is wide vertical boards with the battens removed. The original whitewashed board and batten siding remains completely intact on the north gable end within the lower section of the shed addition. The shed addition is covered with German siding under the asphalt shingles.

The interior of Tolson's Chapel is a single open room consisting of the sanctuary with rows of wooden pews painted brown and the chancel on the north end. The chancel has a lower platform in front only one step high, with a curved railing with turned balusters across the center front and east side, and a closed panel railing on the west front. On the west side of the lower platform, behind the closed panel railing, is a single choir pew and the piano behind. Another platform, several steps higher, forms the center of the chancel and consists of a central wooden lectern with two wood pedestals (for candles?) on either side of the lectern. The steps to the upper platform are on the east side of the lower platform. Behind is the apse (alcove), which is empty and unadorned, but has a shallow arched ceiling and an architrave consisting of a wooden elliptical archway with an applied central "keystone" and plain pilasters. The pump organ sits in the northeast corner at the sanctuary floor level. The south end of the room has a balcony with additional pew seating accessed by winder stairs and supported by two square tapered columns painted brown. The small boarded window in the south gable opens into the balcony. An opening in the ceiling above the balcony opens into an attic crawlspace. A closet space under the balcony winder stair reveals the whitewashed corner-post log construction of the building. The space is open down to ground level and is filled with artifacts.

The ceiling and walls are lath and plaster with several layers of paint. Liquid slate can be seen under the paint layers of the side walls in the northwest and northeast corners and extends as far as the northernmost window of the west and east walls. The paint layers at these locations include (from first to current): brown coat (sub-coat of plaster); white coat (finish plaster coat); possible layer of whitewash; liquid slate; calcimine paint; white skim coat (found on east side over liquid slate); light brown (appears to stop at the level of the wainscot); pink (in spotty areas over the brown); yellow; blue (current). The painted blackboard, "slating" or "liquid slate" was made with lamp black. "Several

commercial preparations, such as 'Liquid Slating' or 'Silicate Surface' were available before 1870." A published recipe from THE MANUFACTURER AND BUILDER, May 1870, p. 156 directs: "To make a common blackboard on a plastered wall, take a solution of shellac in alcohol, mix a small quantity of lampblack with it, sufficient to cover the wall perfectly, but add also a very small quantity of the finest emery; this makes the surface gritty, while otherwise it would be too smooth to take the chalk." (from David H. Wallace, "Furnishing Plan for Classroom and Kitchen, Paymaster's House," Harpers Ferry National Park, October, 1974.) Stained wood wainscoting lines the lower three feet of the walls from the chancel to the front door. This was applied ca.1925. The floors are covered with pine tongue and groove flooring. The center aisle, front aisle, and chancel all are covered with a burnished orange indoor/outdoor style carpet. The earlier floral print Axminster cut pile carpet remains exposed in the area of the piano and choir pew and under the current carpet on the rest of the chancel platforms. The earlier aisle carpets, striped runners, also remain under the current carpet runners; underneath the runners the floorboards are unstained.

A Heatrola coal stove sits on the east side of the sanctuary near the center of the building. The stove pipe runs straight up and then turns 90 degrees toward the east wall where it enters the exterior brick chimney. This stove was a 1950s replacement of an earlier "pot-bellied" stove that apparently vented through an interior brick chimney, the collapsed remnants of which were located in the attic crawlspace and recently removed for safety. A change in the floor stain immediately in front of the current location of the Heatrola stove indicates the location of the earlier stove. An iron bar near the ceiling spans the width of the building above the stove, possibly to aid in supporting the log walls. The room is lit by two electric bulbs hanging by their wires from the ceiling with enameled tin saucer-style reflectors. Lighting prior to electricity was provided by oil lamps, the brackets remain attached to the balcony columns.

Statement of Significance

Tolson's Chapel is significant under National Register Criterion A for its association with the movement toward African-American social independence and education during the post-Civil War years and beyond. Constructed in 1866, following emancipation of Maryland's slaves in 1864, the chapel served as a place of worship for Sharpsburg's population of free and newly-freed black families. It also functioned as a schoolhouse for the children of those families. Lacking opportunities for public education, the community turned to the federally-run Freedmen's Bureau to supply a teacher while the chapel served as schoolroom for 18 children in the first year, 12 of them formerly enslaved. After 1870, when the Freedmen's Bureau was dismantled, the chapel continued to serve double duty, as the worship center for the Sharpsburg African-American community and as schoolhouse, until 1899 when the Washington County School Board built its first school building for the "Colored" children of Sharpsburg. Tolson's Chapel remained an active Methodist Episcopal Church through the 1930s but began to decline through the mid-20th century until in 1994, it was closed by the United Methodist Conference having only two left in the congregation. The last member residing in Sharpsburg passed away in 1996.

The period of significance, 1866-1958, extends from the date of the building's construction to a date fifty years in the past. The chapel continued in use, albeit with a declining membership, until 1994.

Historic Context

As an institution in Maryland, slavery varied in its application as widely as the diverse geographical regions of the state. On the tobacco growing plantations of the Eastern Shore and southern Maryland, the slave labor system seemed well suited to the labor-intensive production of tobacco. In these regions, primarily occupied by wealthy English or Scotch-Irish landowners, the social and economic make-up closely resembled that of their southern neighbors in Virginia. Northern and western Maryland, however, largely settled by German immigrants and their descendents migrating from Pennsylvania, developed grain-based farming economies. The more seasonal labor requirements of grain farming were less conducive to the expense of holding large numbers of slaves throughout the year. Free black and immigrant day laborers formed the core of the labor force in these regions.

Between 1790 and 1850, the slave population in Maryland as a whole declined.[1] At the same time, the free black population increased due to manumissions and free births (children of free women were born free), and to a small extent from fugitives from the south. Increasing economic development in the northern and western counties associated with the profitable grain-based agriculture and industry, coupled with cheap free black and immigrant labor, began to tip the balance of power in Maryland. First, economically and eventually politically, power was drawn away from the landed slaveholders

and toward the industrialists centered in Baltimore. This shift in power, however, did not fully take effect until the trauma of the Civil War forced the issue.

In October 1860, the editor of the Hagerstown newspaper Herald & Torch noted with remarkable insight the impending devastation the Civil War would bring:

> Washington county is a border county, and the people of no State and no county have suffered more from the accursed agitation of slavery than they, and none would share larger in the horrors of a dissolution of the Government.[2]

Literally sandwiched between the southern slave states and the northern free states, Maryland, and Washington County in particular, was politically and economically divided, a microcosm of the divided Union. Largely because of its border status and the deep political divisions, Maryland remained in the Union despite its status as a "slave state." Thus, although the Antietam Battle, which precipitated Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation freeing the slaves in the rebellion states, took place on Maryland ground in 1862, ironically, Maryland's slaves continued to live in bondage for two more years. But the politics and circumstances of the Civil War were bringing closer the long hoped for freedom.

By 1862, the institution of slavery in Maryland was dissolving, losing with each day its economic viability.[3] The final blow to the maintenance of slavery in Maryland came in 1863 when the Union army began recruiting black men. Beginning with the enlistment of free blacks, the recruitment eventually culminated in the War Department's General Order 329, which would "provide for enlistment of free blacks, slaves of disloyal owners, and slaves of consenting loyal owners in the border states."[4] Owners loyal to the Union were entitled to compensation for the enlistment of their slaves, who would be free at the end of their service. Some slave owners in Maryland viewed this as perhaps their last opportunity for receiving payment for the loss of their property. Twenty such owners in Washington County claimed compensation for the enlistment of twenty-seven slaves.[5] In the Sharpsburg District Washington C. Snively sent two slaves, George W. and John W. Fisher to serve in the 2nd USCT, Co. I, Jacob Snively sent Osborne Duckett to serve in the 30th USCT, Samuel I. Piper sent William Snowden, and William M. Blackford sent Edward Jackson, both to serve in the 39th USCT.[6]

The arduous march toward emancipation in Maryland through 1863 and 1864 was couched in a perceived political rather than moral injustice. More conservative Marylanders saw it as primarily championed by politicians representing the swiftly expanding population in and around Baltimore City. In October 1864, the citizens of Maryland, with the exception of those not qualified to vote under the loyalty oath, voted in favor of the new constitution, establishing a new Declaration of Rights, that "all persons held to service or labor, as slaves, are hereby declared free."[7] The document passed by the narrowest margin of 263 votes, said to have been achieved by the use of soldiers' votes.[8] And, as promised by the politicians, there would be few rights as citizens for Maryland's African-American population.

The more immediate result of the dramatic vote in October 1864 was the emancipation of nearly 90,000 slaves in Maryland. One Washington County owner, Otho Nesbitt of Clear Spring, recorded his reaction in his diary the day after emancipation took effect:

> Nov. 2, 1864 – I told the negroes that I had nothing more to do with them, that they were all free, and would have to shift for themselves.[9]

Nesbitt offered to allow his former slaves to remain with him through the winter, "but that I couldn't pay a whole family of negroes to cook a little victuals for me after all that I had lost to both armies." While some of Nesbitt's former slaves may have remained for the winter, many freedmen throughout Maryland began the process of establishing their own communities in towns and rural areas. The seeds for some communities were sown decades earlier, where free blacks had purchased land and settled.[10] Many chose to leave their home counties for work in Baltimore and cities elsewhere.

The rural black population of western Maryland made remarkable steps toward establishing their own communities in rural areas or in sections of established towns. For all of these communities, the establishment of a church was an early goal. With little help from government agencies or their white neighbors, churches, schools, homes, and social halls were constructed using money, manpower, and supplies from within the African-American community.

Independent African-American congregations were largely an outgrowth of emancipation. Rural slaves and freemen were primarily limited to the churches of their white masters or employers, or to the itinerant circuits of the African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E.) ministers. Although the early Methodist Episcopal Church was vocal in its opposition to slavery – one of its prominent Philadelphia members stated "slavery is contrary to the Golden Law of God…" – the general membership was not prevented from owning slaves.[11] Black members split from the Methodist church over the issue of slavery around 1794, creating the African Methodist Episcopal church (A.M.E.) in the mid-Atlantic region.[12] Southern Washington and Frederick Counties had as many as eight A.M.E. churches, serviced by former slave Rev. Thomas Henry through the 1830s and 40s, including the large slave labor force at the Antietam Ironworks.[13] Some blacks, however, remained with the Methodist Episcopal Church. Emancipation precipitated a new social construct in which black and white worshiped separately, resulting in the phenomenal growth of African-American sects of established churches such as the Methodist Episcopal and Baptist, as well as the A.M.E. Church.[14]

On October 27th 1864, the Methodist Episcopal Church of Maryland organized the Washington Conference, "providing for the organization of Mission Annual Conferences for the Colored people belonging to said church." Noted Bishop Levi presiding over the organizational conference:

> …there was something too in the fact that the day on which the first Annual Conference of Colored Preachers of the Methodist Episcopal Church ever held in The State of Maryland closes, is the day on which the dominion of Slavery ceases. Ninety Thousand of your brethren…will lie down tonight, if indeed they do lie down, with the manacles

> of Slavery upon them, but when the midnight hour shall strike, even as the angel came and unloosed Peter, and he arose a free man, so shall their chains fall off, and these thousands shall rise to the dignity of free men.[15]

Beginning with just four Elders, local preachers were assigned to mission churches throughout the region, the "Chesapeake District" covering the northern counties of the state and the "Potomac District" covering the southern counties. Hagerstown was listed in the Chesapeake District with 28 members; the preacher yet to be supplied. By the following year, the "Shenandoah District" was added to encompass circuits in West Virginia. On the final day of that first Washington Conference, October 31st 1864, a resolution was offered and approved:

> Thanksgiving to God for Emancipation.
>
> Resolved – Above all – That we do hereby offer devout thanksgiving and praise to the Giver of all Good, for the blessings of His Providence in making Maryland a *Free State*, and restoring to liberty many of our brethren, who have heretofore been held in bondage. To God be the glory, and to us the privilege and duty of making this dispensation available for our moral and intellectual elevation.[16]

Despite these high ideals envisioned by the men of the Washington Conference, the 1864 constitution that freed the slaves of Maryland provided little civil recourse for the treatment many blacks received at the hands of white employers, neighbors, and even county governments. The Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, more commonly known as the Freedmen's Bureau, was created by Congress in 1865 to address issues of Reconstruction in the South. The Freedmen's Bureau operated also in southern Maryland and in the counties around the Federal capital city. But by 1866, the Bureau's activities expanded to cover all of Maryland, a result of numerous complaints of unfair and abusive treatment of black Marylanders.[17]

Perhaps the greatest impact the Freedmen's Bureau had in western Maryland was its help in the establishment of freedmen's schools. Although an 1865 Maryland law required that school taxes collected from black landowners "shall be set aside for the purpose of founding schools for colored children," this provided precious little in the form of monetary support for black education.[18] Given the small number of black landowners at the time in Washington County, less than 100 in 1870, the school taxes collected there were actually quite small. In February 1867, Washington County School Board minutes recorded, "...the appropriation made in November last [$30] to Colored Schools shall be equally divided between Williamsport and Hagerstown." And a year later they paid "to the Colored Schools of the County – the sum of $25 a piece."[19] Based on this, in 1868, the Board reported to the Freedmen's Bureau that it had "paid what the law allows for these schools." According to the Freedmen's Bureau Harper's Ferry Region director, it was the only county in Maryland to have done so.[20] But in 1869, the School Board appropriated $300 to "build the Hagerstown Colored school,"

incredibly however, "on condition that future distributions be withheld up to the $300 amount."[21] The Hagerstown school trustees requested in a letter to the Freedmen's Bureau, "...further aid in the erection of their house," saying "they were disappointed in getting the $300 which the County School Board said they were entitled to under the school law."[22]

Given the lack of local government funding, for many years church buildings, particularly in rural areas, necessarily served as schoolhouses. This was true even despite involvement of the Freedmen's Bureau in Maryland. The Freedmen's Bureau established schools between 1866 and 1870, often providing only the teacher, leaving the building and salary up to the local black community or a philanthropic organization. In Washington County, these schools were located in Hancock, Clear Spring, Williamsport, Hagerstown, Sharpsburg, Pleasant Valley, and Sandy Hook.[23]

After the demise of the Freedmen's Bureau in 1870, county school boards slowly took on their legal responsibility. County atlas maps, drawn in the 1870s show the growing number of "colored" schoolhouses in rural areas, although there is some question whether these represent actual county school buildings or are county schools located in other community buildings such as churches. In 1881, Thomas Scharf noted twelve "colored" schools in Washington County. However, Scharf's list of school buildings in the county revealed only three buildings for black students.[24] Presumably, church buildings housed the remaining eight colored schools. Of the African-American county-built schoolhouses still extant in Washington County, most were constructed in the 1880s and 1890s.

Clearly, through the last half of the dramatic decade of the 1860s, black Marylanders struggled to establish themselves as free Americans in an atmosphere of white fear, mistrust, and often-outright bigotry. The quick retreat by many pro-emancipation Marylanders from the Unconditional Unionist Party to the Conservative Union/Democratic coalition was as much motivated by fear of "negro equality" as by opposition to the Reconstruction policies enacted by the Republican-led Congress. But the national march toward civil rights began in 1866 with the passage of the Civil Rights Bill. In 1870, Congress passed the Fifteenth Amendment, providing the right to vote to black men in all states, although Maryland did not support the amendment.[25]

Within this general climate of white conservatism toward social equality throughout the state of Maryland, African-Americans found a limited number of opportunities to establish new communities. Their choices were also limited by the availability of employment. Throughout the state, large numbers of freedmen migrated to Baltimore in search of employment; the black population of Baltimore grew from nearly 28,000 in 1860 to almost 54,000 in 1880.[26] While most counties experienced some black population growth through these decades, Washington and Frederick Counties saw small declines.[27] Despite these declines, however, a variety of employment for freedmen could be found in these counties, from farm labor and domestic service to railroad work, millwork, and canal work.

By the turn of the twentieth century, western Maryland's rural African-American communities were well established and alive with activity. Many houses and church buildings, updated during the first decades of the century, attested to the stability and financial growth of the inhabitants. In 1906,

local writer John Philemon Smith described the 35 members of the "Colored M.E. Church" of Sharpsburg in Washington County as "mostly well to do people."[28] Through the 1930s, 40s, and 50s, many rural blacks found small scale farming unprofitable and little employment was available in the rural towns. Migration of younger generations to cities, both within the home county and outside, resulted in a nearly complete exodus of the rural black population in Washington County.

Resource History

The village of Sharpsburg, Maryland is located in Washington County on the west side of Antietam Creek, between the Creek and the Potomac River. From as early as 1800, Sharpsburg included a small population of free blacks as well as slaves. In 1860, 41 free blacks lived in Sharpsburg and by 1870, the African-American population numbered 60, including two landowners.[29] Although the community was scattered around the edges of the town, a small church building, which doubled as a school building, provided a community identity.

After 1865, as freedmen's communities developed, often the first community building was the church. An important source of comfort in a difficult life, the church provided "release, redemption, [and] revitalization."[30] The church building itself, generally quite simple in design, was perhaps the greatest symbol of identity for the black community. The trustees of the congregation, often the landowners of the community, were the owner of record for most rural churches.

Establishment and Early Years of Tolson's Chapel

In Sharpsburg – where the nation's bloodiest single-day battle of the Civil War culminated in President Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation of 1863 – the black members of the local Methodist Episcopal Church established their independent congregation by 1866. In that year, the congregation erected a small chapel, later called Tolson's Chapel, according to a local newspaper:

> The African Church, of which the Corner Stone was laid a few weeks ago, is framed, and will be ready for worship about the holidays.[31]

The following year, Samuel Craig (Crague) deeded part of Lot 104 on High Street to the trustees of the Methodist Episcopal (M.E.) Church, including himself, David Simon, Wilson Middleton, Jacob Turner, and John Francis.[32] The deed, dated the 15th of November 1867, indicates the conveyance occurred a full year after the chapel was constructed and occupied, "...containing 35 feet in length and 25 feet in width…together with all the buildings and improvements thereonto…" However, the part of Lot 104 described in the 1867 deed, "situated upon the South east corner of lot No.104," was not in fact where the building was erected. Although this might be a clerical error, there may also have been an

understanding that the whole west half of Lot 104 would eventually be conveyed, as it finally was in 1883.[33]

Architecturally, Tolson's Chapel is a relatively rare and intact example of corner-post log construction. The structure is a hybrid of traditional log construction which features horizontal logs with interlocked corners, and braced frame construction with vertical posts and diagonal corner braces. Examples of corner post log construction in Washington County are less common than traditional log construction, and all that have been examined date from the third quarter of the 19th century.

The personal stories of the Chapel trustees, Samuel Craig, David Simon, Wilson Middleton, and John Francis, reveal the different paths that led each man to the Methodist Episcopal chapel on High Street in Sharpsburg. Only Jacob Turner remains unknown and could not be found in either the 1860 or 1870 census records.

Samuel Craig was listed as a free man (Samuel Crake) as early as the 1840 census. His accounts with the Sharpsburg Tannery in 1844 indicate that Craig owned cattle, sheep, and grew potatoes.[34] These items he used as payment for tannery services, a common practice. The 1860 census showed Samuel Craig living in Sharpsburg with $150 worth of real estate. Through the 1860s, Craig acquired four town lots on the north side of High Street, the south edge of Sharpsburg. In 1871, Samuel Craig (Crague) and his wife Cassey sold the remaining property, Lots 101, 102, 103, and 104, "except the parcel of ground on which the church now stands," to Dennis Harper, an African-American living in Allegany County, Maryland.[35]

Wilson Middleton arrived in Sharpsburg probably early in 1866. He served during the Civil War in the 115th Regiment, Company F, of the United States Colored Infantry (more commonly known as the United States Colored Troops or USCT). The 115th Regiment was organized in Bowling Green Kentucky in 1864, although it is not known whether that is where Middleton joined the ranks. The regiment mustered out of service in February 1866 in Texas where they were on duty in the District of the Rio Grande.[36] By 1870 Middleton was listed on the census living in the Sharpsburg District (outside of town) of Washington County. He was 41 years of age, worked as a Day Laborer, and owned no property. Wilson Middleton was living with a woman named Maria Middleton, age 59, and three small children: Mary Ann, age 7; Lilly, age 5; and James T., age 8 months. Another woman, Harriet Hess, age 54, also lived in the Middleton household.[37] Middleton listed his place of birth as Maryland however no record of him in Maryland could be found prior to 1870. It is quite possible that Wilson Middleton was born a slave in Maryland and was freed through his military service during the Civil War, although this is not confirmed. Middleton was buried in the Tolson's Chapel cemetery in 1891.[38]

David Simon (Simons, Sammons, Samons) lived in Sharpsburg as a free man as early as 1860. He was listed as "Mulatto," 28 years old, worked as a Laborer, and apparently could read and write. Although he did not own real estate, Simons listed $50 worth of personal property on the census. His

wife was Margaret Simons, also Mulatto, was 30 years old, and they had two children: Laura, age 5, and James, age 8 months. David B. Simons served as the teacher for the Sharpsburg Colored School from 1874 to 1877 and as trustee of the school from 1877 until his death in 1908.[39] Simons was buried in the Tolson's Chapel cemetery in 1908, he was 76 years old.

In 1860, 12 year old John Francis was a free black living on the farm of Moses Cox outside of Sharpsburg. Although no occupation was listed for young John Francis, he was not attending school and presumably worked as a farm laborer on the Cox farm. He may have been the son of Aditha Francis, living nearby in the Sharpsburg District with four young children (the oldest age 10, the youngest 4 months) but no husband. But there was also Maria Francis, age 50, who lived in the town of Sharpsburg and was a near neighbor of Samuel Craig. Maria's household included only a boy named Robert, age 10. By the 1870 census, John Francis, described as "Mulatto," was 24 years old and married to a woman named Barbara. He was listed in the Beaver Creek District in the household of Harry Prather, a black day laborer.

Sharpsburg's Colored Methodist Episcopal (M.E.) log chapel was apparently completed by the end of the year in 1866, but it was not dedicated until October 1867.[40] The earliest documented reference to its being called "Tolson's Chapel" was in 1881, in which the local newspaper reported a festival being held at "Tolson's M.E. Church."[41] Several Sunday School Hymnals found in the chapel were inscribed "Sharpsburg T C 1875," which may indicate an even earlier date for the use of the Tolson's Chapel name.[42] In fact, in 1865 and 1866, John R. Tolson was assigned to the Hagerstown Circuit or Station by the Washington Conference, listed with 3 churches and 161 members.[43] Tolson was likely instrumental in the establishment of the Sharpsburg mission. But in 1867 he was assigned to Winchester, Virginia, where he stayed until 1869. In 1870, John R. Tolson died at the age of 30.[44] It is likely the Sharpsburg chapel was dedicated to Tolson shortly after his death in 1870.

The Sharpsburg mission chapel, apparently begun by John Tolson in the Hagerstown Circuit, was shuffled between several regional circuits throughout its operation. After leaving Hagerstown in 1867, Tolson was replaced by C. G. Keyes, however, the Sharpsburg chapel was reportedly served by Jarrett Bowman.[45] Bowman was born a slave in Charles Town, [West] Virginia in 1816. He purchased his own freedom for the price of $650 in 1857. Jarrett Bowman, according to his memoir (obituary) in the 1879 M.E. General Minutes, was assigned to Hagerstown in 1864 and returned to the area in 1867 when he served the Jefferson Circuit [Shepherdstown? and perhaps Sharpsburg] in the newly formed Shenandoah District. In 1872 the Sharpsburg church was assigned to the Williamsport Circuit, and it appears to have transferred among these three circuits, and possibly the Middletown Circuit, from year to year.[46]

The "Hagerstown & Sharpsburg Circuit" in 1871 was served by Philip Scott. The Sharpsburg "station" listed 25 members, 2 deaths, 6 probations, 0 local preachers, 0 adult baptisms, 10 child baptisms, 1 church with a $400 probable value, 0 parsonage, 2 Sunday schools, 9 officers & teachers, and 55 [Sunday school] scholars. Preacher Daniel Aquilla, who served at Sharpsburg in 1870, was assigned to the "Williamsport & Sharpsburg Circuit" in 1872. That year, Sharpsburg listed 12

members, 1 death, 6 probationers, 1 adult baptism, 12 child baptisms, 1 church with $600 value, "Benevolent Contributions"- "For Missionary Society...Churches $150...Sunday Schools $100", 2 Sunday schools, 4 officers & teachers, 20 scholars, and 20 volumes in library. Jacob M. Gross was stationed at Sharpsburg in 1873, when the Committee on Missions recommended $100 be given to Sharpsburg (Chesapeake District), a relatively large sum compared to others that were mostly $25-50. In 1874, the Sharpsburg station had 37 members, 19 probationers, 3 deaths, 4 child baptisms, 1 church valued at $700, 1 Sabbath school, 5 officers & teachers, and 45 scholars.[47]

Other preachers who served Tolson's Chapel included H. [Alexander N.] Kennedy (1869-1871 at Williamsport), J. Armstrong (not found in M.E. records), Samuel S. Brown (1876, Middletown), Henry Williams (1878, Middletown), George Washington Wesley Jenkins (1874, Jefferson; 1879, Middletown; 1881, Williamsport), and Benjamin W. Brown, Jr. (Williamsport) who in 1882 was serving a congregation of 35 at Sharpsburg.[48]

Early members of the chapel congregation included both town and farm dwellers. Among them were several former slaves who were living on the farms of the Antietam Battlefield at the time of the battle in September 1862. In 1860, Nancy Campbell was a 40-year old free black woman employed as a servant on the William Roulette farm, where 15-year old Robert Simon also worked as a farm hand. Nancy was the former slave of Peter Miller, uncle of William Roulette's wife, Margaret Ann Roulette.[49] In June 1859, Andrew Miller freed Nancy Campbell.[50] Nancy, who later changed her name to Nancy Camel, appears to have immediately taken employment in the Roulette home where she remained for the rest of her life. She was a member of the Tolson's Chapel congregation as well as the Manor Church, a Dunker congregation north of Sharpsburg. In 1883, "Mrs. Nancy [Cammell]" donated a large bible to Tolson's Chapel.[51] After her death in 1892, Nancy was laid to rest in the Manor Church cemetery. In her will, she divided her $867 cash estate among Susan Rebecca Roulette, William's daughter, and the children of both Peter and Andrew Miller, as well as $20 each to the Manor Church and Tolson's Chapel.[52]

On the Piper farm, adjoining the Roulette's lived Jeremiah (Jerry) Cornelius Summers. Jerry was born a slave in 1849 on the Piper farm near Sharpsburg. At age 13, Jerry accompanied the Piper family when they abandoned their home in September 1862, as the Confederate army began to set up their line of defense across the farm's fields and orchard. Two years later, in April of 1864, Jerry was "enlisted" into the Union army.[53] Only fifteen years old and reportedly much loved by his master Henry Piper, Summers was permitted to return home as the slave of a Union loyalist. After his emancipation in November 1864, Jerry continued working and living on the Piper farm, employed by Henry's son Samuel. Henry Piper retired to an elegant stone house in nearby Sharpsburg, where he employed Jerry's brother Emory Summers, also born a slave on the Piper farm. In 1924, Fred W. Cross, a visitor to the Antietam Battlefield, took several photographs of Jerry Summers at his home located on Bloody Lane on the northern edge of the Piper farm. Cross described Summers as "the last of the slaves of Sharpsburg," noting:

> At Henry Piper's death Jerry was given the use for life of a small cottage and garden plot facing the northerly stretch of the "Bloody Lane."[54]

Jeremiah Cornelius Summers died the following year in 1925 at the age of 76; he was followed by his wife, Susan Keets Summers, in 1942. Emory Summers died in his 83rd year, in 1941. All were laid to rest in the Tolson's Chapel cemetery.

Hilary Watson was a slave of John Otto who owned a 60-acre farm near the Antietam Creek's Lower Bridge (later known as Burnside's Bridge). In 1860, Otto listed two slaves one was a 54-year old woman and the second a 27-year old man named Hilary.[55] In a 1915 interview, Hilary Watson recalled that Otto paid him for harvest work and for work while hired out to other farmers. In May 1864, when Watson was called in the Union draft, Otto paid the $300 fee to release him from military service. Watson continued to work for John Otto following his emancipation in 1864, but did not remain on the Otto farm. At the time of the 1870 census, Watson, age 35 (37?), lived with his wife Christina and Adeline Turner, aged 104 years (Christina's grandmother?), along the Hagerstown Pike near the Roulette and D.R. Miller farms. In 1872, Hilary Watson and his wife purchased a lot on High Street in Sharpsburg, on which they built a log house.[56] By 1883, Watson served as a trustee of Tolson's Chapel and his wife, "Teany," was listed in 1881 as one of the managers of a festival along with Harriet Gray, Emma J. Cook, Mary E. Smith, Harriet Brown, and Louisa Green.[57] In the graveyard of Tolson's Chapel stands the marker of Hilary Watson, aged 85 years, who died on September 20, 1917, and "Christiana," age 87, who died August 25, 1915.

American Union School

Education, so long denied African-Americans both slave and free, was not only a source of pride but also a key to economic growth. Apparently ignored by the county school board, early in 1868, the black community of Sharpsburg actively sought a way to provide education for their children and for many of the adults. Offering their church building to house a Freedmen's Bureau school, they secured a promise from the Bureau to provide a teacher, but at the community's expense. On March 28, 1868, Capt. J.C. Brubaker, in charge of the Freedmen's Bureau in the Harpers Ferry Region, wrote a letter to Rev. John Kimball, Superintendent of Education for the Freedmen's Bureau in Washington, D.C., shortly after his visit to Sharpsburg. Having arranged for a teacher Brubaker wrote in his March letter:

> The colored people are very anxious to have the school opened and from the spirit manifested I am assured that they will fulfill their part of the contract. I did not have time to arrange for his [the teacher] board but do not think there will be any difficulty.[58]

Brubaker went on to estimate approximately 30 daytime students and an equal number of adults in the evening.

Ezra A. Johnson, a white teacher from Philadelphia, arrived in Sharpsburg by April of 1868. On April 6, he wrote to Rev. Kimball:

> Arrived here safe and sound, but failed to get board with the white people, notwithstanding their having promised the coloured people to give it at a reasonable price…I am now boarding with one coloured family and lodging with two, until better accommodations can be provided. The fact of the matter is, Mr. Kimble, the citizens would allow a coloured man to teach here, but if possible, they won't allow a white teacher to come here and teach the coloured people; and they have made up their minds to freeze me out with cold shoulders. But I am too well accustomed to a cold shoulder to allow of that. I have opened a day school, night school, and Sabbath school and will this week organize the Vanguard of Freedom.[59]

Johnson's previous assignment was in a school in Upper Marlboro, Prince Georges County, Maryland, where he was informed "it was unsafe" for a white man to teach in a colored school.[60]

Despite these trials, Ezra Johnson did open the school in Sharpsburg on April 6, 1868. The school was christened "American Union" school. Johnson's official school report submitted to the Freedmen's Bureau Education department provided the details of the little school. Grades taught by Johnson at the school included both primary and intermediate. He noted that the school opened on April 6 and "Continues without limit." He reported that the school was not supported by any "Educational Society," or by the local school board, but that it was "wholly supported by the Freedmen." Johnson also reported that the Bureau did not pay the Freedmen any rent for use of the church building as a school. Total enrollment for the month was listed as 18 students, equally divided between male and female, and of those, 16 were described as "always present." And of the 18 day students, only six were listed as "free before the war," meaning 12 of the children were previously enslaved. There were also descriptions of the student's abilities: eight knew the alphabet; seven "spell and read easy lessons"; and one was an advanced reader, knew geography and arithmetic. The Sabbath school had three teachers and "about 25 regular" students, giving some idea of the size of the congregation in 1868. According to Johnson's accounts, the local white population's opinion of the school ranged from "indifferent" to "unfavorable."[61] Attendance through the first two years of operation ranged from 15 to 25 students.[62] In 1869, the 25 students studied under a new teacher John J. Carter, who reported "They learn very fast."[63]

In 1870, Congress discontinued the Freedmen's Bureau operations and it fell to the county to provide educational opportunity to its black residents. The Washington County School Board appointed trustees for the "Colored Schools" for the first time in May 1871. The Colored Schools of Williamsport, Clear Spring, Sandy Hook, Indian Springs, Beaver Creek, Hagerstown, and Sharpsburg were each overseen by three trustees, appointed for three years. The Sharpsburg trustees appointed were T.H. Sliner, George Hopewell, and Nathan Keller. In 1874 the trustees were Andrew N. Malone, Hilleary [sic] Watson, and J. [Jacob] M. Gross, the preacher at Tolson's Chapel from 1873-1876. Also

in 1874, the first record of a teacher confirmed by the county for the Sharpsburg Colored School was David Samons (Simons), although it is likely that Simons taught the little school for the years between the demise of the Freedmen's Bureau and his confirmation in 1874. David B. Simons continued as the teacher at the Sharpsburg Colored School until 1877 when he was appointed one of the trustees along with Hilary Watson and George Tyler.[64]

James F. Simons (Samons) was confirmed as the teacher in 1879, following two years of service by George W. Smith. James Simons, son of David B. Simons and an active member of Tolson's Chapel congregation, continued as the Sharpsburg Colored School teacher into the 20th century. Historian J. Thomas Scharf recorded the 1881 report for County Colored School No. 4 in Sharpsburg, with 22 pupils and James F. Simons as teacher.[65]

Throughout the initial period of county administration no mention was made of construction of a new school for the black students of Sharpsburg. Indeed it appears that the school continued to be held in Tolson's Chapel and in August 1876 the Board appropriated "the following sums as rent for the school houses," including $15 for S.D. (School District) 4 of E.D. (Election District) 1, the designation given to Sharpsburg Colored School. Rent paid for schoolhouses was not recorded in the minutes of the School Board again until 1899 when $20 was paid to "D.B. Samons, Treasurer" at the Sharpsburg school, at that time referred to as E.D. 1, S.D. 5. That same year, in 1899, the county built a frame schoolhouse for Sharpsburg Colored School, at a cost of $682, ending 31 years of operation in Tolson's Chapel.[66]

Church Activity through the 19th Century

The Tolson's Chapel congregation was active throughout the second half of the 19th century. In addition to their support of the Sharpsburg Colored School, they continued to hold Sunday services, Sunday school, fairs, festivals, and bush meetings. They purchased at least 16 Sunday school hymnals in 1875, inscribed in the front cover "Sharpsburg T C [Tolson's Chapel] 1875." Also a set of Bibles printed in 1880 were purchased from "F. Markell, Books and Stationery, Frederick City, Md.," several inscribed with warnings: "Children after reading your lesson return it to the Sup. [Superintendent]" or "Never take this Bible from School." And after 1891, Wilmore's New Analytical Reference Bible was purchased for use during Sunday services; the same Bible was left open on the lectern when the chapel doors were closed 100 years later. The local newspapers reported a bush meeting being held by the "colored people of Sharpsburg" in David Otto's woods on September 29, 1888 with Rev. John H. Bailey officiating.[67] On November 20, 1891 a revival was held in the "AME" church in Sharpsburg, also reported by the local newspaper, although technically Tolson's Chapel was not affiliated with the African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E.) sect.[68]

Activity and development was occurring along High Street as well. In 1885, Dennis Harper, who purchased the remaining Craig lots in 1871 but still lived in Allegany County, sold a parcel to Burrell T. Middleton, grandson of original church trustee Wilson Middleton. The lot included the east

half of Lot 104 and the west half of Lot 103. At a price of $175, it is possible that Middleton was already living on the parcel in the two-story log house constructed there.[69] Interestingly, the deed described the boundaries of the parcel adjoining "the lot of William Gray" on the east, the east half of Lot 103, the conveyance of which to Harriet A. (Gray) Robinson did not occur until 1888.[70] William Gray served as trustee of the Sharpsburg Colored School from 1881 to 1884.[71] It seems likely that the Grays too were living on their parcel at least several years before their purchase. Eventually, the Harriet A. Robinson house, adjoining the Hilary Watson house to the east, would become the home of Harriet A. (Gray) Calaman. Harriet Calaman was the daughter of Max and Ida Gray and perhaps niece of Harriet A. (Gray) Robinson. Ida Gray was the adopted daughter of Hilary and Christina Watson. Harriet A. Calaman, who attended Storer College in Harpers Ferry, West Virginia, taught at the 1899 Sharpsburg Colored School and later the Weverton Colored School.[72]

Dennis Harper began his land sales on High Street in June 1883 when he sold the remaining west half of Lot 104 bordering the church to the then trustees, Hillary [sic] Watson, David B. Samons [sic], and William H. Gray, "in trust for the said Methodist Episcopal Church called Tolson's Chapel." The quarter acre lot was described, "...fronting 52 feet 10 inches on Said Street [High St.] and extending back to an alley...206 feet."[73] This was the cemetery lot, and although there are a number of unmarked graves in the cemetery, none of the marked graves pre-date this 1883 conveyance. Perhaps the earliest stone, for "Mehaley Thomas, age 100y[ears]," did not include a date of death, however Mahala Thomas' death at the age of 104 was reported in the September 29, 1888 issue of the *Antietam Wavelet*.[74] The M.E. Washington Conference minutes recorded among the Sharpsburg statistics two deaths in the church in 1871, one death in 1872, and three deaths in 1874, so it is likely that burials began as early as 1871.[75]

Beginning in the 1890s and through the 1920s, the Tolson's Chapel cemetery was relatively active with burials. In 1891, Wilson Middleton died, "an aged and highly respected colored man and an ex-union soldier," noted the local newspaper.[76] In 1893, Minnie May Beeler, age 9 months and daughter of George W. and Julia Beeler, was buried. Carlina (Summers) Jackson, probably daughter of Jeremiah and Susan Summers, died November 24, 1893. And in 1895, 45-year old Harriet A. Robinson passed away. Several of Sharpsburg's former slaves died in the first decades of the 20th century, including Hilary Watson (1917) and Jerry Summers (1925). David B. Simons died in 1908 at age 76, and his son, Rev. James F. Simons (school teacher and ordained minister) died in 1911. In 1955, Mary E. (Lizzie) King devised in her will "One Hundred ($100.00) Dollars, for the express purpose of erecting a fence around the grave yard adjoining said Tolson Methodist Church," and a chain link fence was therefore installed.[77] The most recent marked grave is that of Frances M. (King) Monroe, wife of Clarence Monroe, and mother of Rev. Ralph Monroe still living in Sharpsburg. Mrs. Monroe died in 1995 and with Virginia Cook, who died in 1996 (no marker), was the last of the Tolson's Chapel congregation that stayed in Sharpsburg (Ralph Monroe returned after his retirement). In all, the cemetery list appears to represent from 12 to 15 families with many inter-marriages.

Tolson's Chapel through the 20th Century

Sharpsburg was home to approximately 85 African-Americans in the 1930s, including farm laborers, shopkeepers, housekeepers, and several skilled house carpenters who continued the art of building log houses through the 1930s. Among the carpenters were Clarence M. Monroe, who built at least part of the house at 227 West Antietam Street where he raised his family, and several houses on Main Street. According to his son, Rev. Ralph Monroe, Clarence Monroe added the wainscoting to the walls of Tolson's Chapel. He also constructed the Marshall Reed Clubhouse on Snyder's Landing Road north of Sharpsburg. George W. Beeler and Robert Jackson also built log houses in the area as well as the Conococheague Sportsmen's Lodge on Canal Road on the south side of Sharpsburg.[78]

The chapel established its chapter of the "Epworth League" in January 1901. The Epworth League, a Methodist youth group, remained active at Tolson's through much of the first half of the 20th century. Several copies of "The Epworth Hymnal…for use in young people's meeting, Sunday Schools, prayer meetings and revivals" (copyright 1900) remain in the church sanctuary. The Epworth League certificate still hangs on the chapel wall above the lectern.

During this period, Tolson's Chapel was first part of the Shepherdstown/ Sharpsburg Charge, a Methodist administrative grouping, and later the Williamsport/ Clear Spring/Sharpsburg Charge. In 1950, the chapel was connected to the Asbury Methodist Church on Jonathon Street in Hagerstown. In the 1960s, the Washington Conference, created specifically for the "colored" members of the Methodist Episcopal Church in the region, was eliminated to allow for integration with the main body of the church.[79] Among the last of Tolson's Chapel's then surviving members, Virginia Cook recorded some of the chapel's history in an undated letter, recalling:

> The conference furnished us a pastor and where we fell short with our money, Mr. Calan would go around to the farmers for chickens and milk and the older ones fixed the chickens and made Home made ice cream. We made good off them. People seemed to buy and help out.[80]

To this day, older citizens of Sharpsburg recall with fond memory the chicken and ice cream produced for the Tolson's Chapel festivals.

By the 1950s, employment opportunities for the young led many away from Sharpsburg and into the city of Hagerstown, a scenario repeated in the rural towns throughout Washington County. As the elderly who remained passed away the young did not return to replace them. In 1976, 110 years after the chapel's construction, the local Hagerstown newspaper announced, "Sunday's Rally Day services at Tolson's Chapel in Sharpsburg drew a crowd of 30 – ten times the size of the little congregation's membership."

> Now the only members who remain are Virginia Cook and her aging aunt and uncle, Frances and Clarence Monroe. "Four or five years ago," says Miss Cook, "different

> ones around town said to me: 'Virginia, it would be easier for you to come to our church and give up yours.' But as I told them," the middle-aged woman explains, "a community is not much of a community without a church. I don't want to see our church go down the drain, either." Consequently, Miss Cook stayed on at the only church she has ever known.

As Virginia Cook led the reporter through the sanctuary, she noted:

> Warmed by a cast-iron, pot-bellied stove, its large, bare light bulbs cast a warm glow around the room. And with its old wooden floors, handmade pulpit and pump organ still intact, the chapel looks just the way it did when I was a little girl.

The Rally Day donations gathered that day, $652.40, were enough to pay the part-time minister's salary as well as maintenance of the building and grounds. Said Miss Cook, "Oh, yes indeedy, that's enough to keep us going."[81] In a later (after 1977) undated letter Virginia Cook recalled:

> Mrs. Frances Monroe and myself are the last two members living. When we couldn't have Festivals we passed envelopes around to people in town and they have given us a donation to help out with exspenses [sic]. We still have church the first Sun. of the month and we have a meeting on Nov. the first Sun. People are invited to attend.
>
> [signed] Virginia Cook[82]

Another (former) member of the Tolson's Chapel congregation, Martha V. Hollins who moved to Hagerstown, wrote a memoir in 1999 entitled "History as I remember, Tolson Chapel":

> My first recollection of Tolson Chapel Methodist Church is that my mother told me that she had attended school in that building.
>
> The only teacher that she spoke of was a Mr. Simores [sic]. He must have been very special to her, for he even taught her to play the old reed organ. He was not only a teacher, but he was also a minister. A tombstone in the adjoining cemetery vows to that fact. He would even encourage her to study hard to keep up with the top students in her class.
>
> The first ministers that I recall my mother speak of was a Rev. C.Y. Trigg and a Rev. Yearwood. Rev. Trigg, his wife Helen and their children used to come back to Sharpsburg to visit our family in the summer time....
>
> My earliest remembrance of a minister was of a Rev. Minor. I believe his name was Charles. Other ministers that I remember are Rev. William Polk, Rev. Green, Rev. Clarence Davis (under whom I joined Tolson in the early 1930's), Rev. Luther Dorsey and Rev. I.A. Moyer.

> Tolson and Asbury Shepherdstown were on the same charge when Revs. Minor, Polk, and Davis were serving our parish. When Revs. Dorsy, Moyer, and Greene [sic] served us, we were connected with Asbury in Williamsport, Maryland. In later years, the minister of Asbury Hagerstown supplied the leadership for Tolson. Among them were John B.A. Dyson, John Forkio, Edwin Reeder, B. Milton Hargrove, Rufus Abernathy, Sr., Julius O. Williams, Christian B. Taylor, Milton King, Yvonne Williams, John Snowden, Boyd N. Walton, Jr., and Anthony T. Carr....
>
> Thomas King, my mother's eldest brother was very active in our church, serving in many capacities including keeping up with the annual conferences. He and a Mr. Kingston Taylor worked together between Asbury in Williamsport and Tolson Chapel in Sharpsburg. Thomas King's life was cut short very early in the nineteen twenties when he succumbed to typhoid fever.
>
> The church continued to be a close knit family. Families then began to leave town to find employment or to further their education. The congregation dwindled down until there were only two active members in the group. Twice a month, the current pastor of Asbury in Hagerstown at the time would meet with them.
>
> Each year, these two ladies would have a special day that they called 'Annual Homecoming.' It was then that a number of former members would return for the celebration. As a matter of fact, the whole community would help to make this a fruitful day, all coming together in one accord.[83]

In 1994, the local conference of the United Methodist Church closed the chapel, citing the fact that the congregation had used the building only once a year for several decades. With the Bible still open on the pulpit and the list of the last Sunday's hymns still posted on the Hymn Board, the door was locked. The chapel clock, chairs (not pews), and bell were dispersed. The conference deconsecrated Tolson's Chapel after the deaths of Frances Monroe in 1995 and Virginia Cook in 1996. Although maintenance of the grounds continued through the years, the building fell into disrepair. Nearly forgotten on the back street of Sharpsburg, the remarkable history of Tolson's Chapel seemed destined to fade away. In 2002, the Baltimore-Washington Conference of the United Methodist Church sold the building to a local preservation group, the Save Historic Antietam Foundation.[84]

Endnotes

[1] Based on U.S. Population Census records for the state from 1790 to 1850, as cited by Fields, p. 15.

[2] Herald & Torch, Oct. 23, 1860, Hagerstown, MD.

[3] Duncan, in Richard Walsh and William Lloyd Fox, *Maryland: A History 1632 – 1974,* (Baltimore, MD: Maryland Historical Society, 1974), p. 370. Duncan cites slave prices in Frederick falling from $2,500 for a "set of slaves" in 1860 to $400 in 1862, and in Hagerstown in 1864 slaves were valued at $5.00 a piece. (citing the Baltimore newspapers American, April 3, 1862, and Sun, March 10, 1864)

[4] Barbara Jeanne Fields, *Slavery and Freedom on the Middle Ground,* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1985), p. 125.

[5] Dean Herrin, "Antietam Rising: The Civil War and Its Legacy in Sharpsburg, Maryland, 1860-1900," manuscript, (Antietam National Battlefield, March 2002), p. 20. See also Fields, p. 128; Fields notes, that "small-holders whose one or two slaves had been lost to them had little heart and less motive to fight on. Accustomed anyway to free black labor, they would do better to cut the best deal possible for their immediate needs and hope for an end to the commotion." Although she was referring to Eastern Shore and southern Maryland slave owners, the same no doubt applied to the "small-holders" of the western counties.

[6] Herrin, p. 21, Table 2, citing Record of Slave Claims Boards, 1864-66 (Maryland, RG 94, Entry 348, National Archives.

[7] Duncan, in Walsh and Fox, pp. 376-377.

[8] Charles L. Wagandt, *The Mighty Revolution: Negro Emancipation in Maryland, 1862-1864*, (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1964), pp. 262-263; Fields, p. 130.

[9] Otho Nesbitt diary, transcribed by Mrs. Florence M. Frantz, *Seems Like Yesterday*, (Clear Spring, MD: Clear Spring Alumni Association, 1976), p. 80.

[10] African-American communities in Montgomery County, Maryland were recorded by George McDaniel, *Black Historical Resources in Upper Western Montgomery County*, (Sugarloaf Regional Trails, 1979). Communities have also been recorded in Frederick and Washington County through Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties surveys: Frederick Co. – Centerville, MIHP #F-7-38 and Pleasant View, MIHP#F-1-139; in Washington Co. the area known as Crystal Falls/Jugtown was surveyed by individual buildings, MIHP#s WA-I-87 through WA-I-91 and WA-I-344.

[11] Walsh and Fox, p. 128.

[12] Jean Libby, ed. *From Slavery to Salvation, The Autobiography of Rev. Thomas W. Henry of the A.M.E. Church,* (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 1994), p. 73.

[13] Ibid, pp. 75-89.

[14] Rev. Thomas Henry, in Libby, p. 87. A few, like the Pleasant Valley A.M.E. congregation served by Rev. Thomas Henry in the 1840s, were given a building no longer used by its white congregation.; Evelyn M.E. Taylor, *Historical Digest*, from Introduction by Rev. Cecil M. Robeck, Jr., p. xxii; John Hope Franklin, *From Slavery to Freedom, A History of Negro Americans*, 3rd Edition, (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1969), p 309.

[15] Minutes of the Washington Conference, original manuscript, Lovely Lane [United Methodist] Museum and Archives, Baltimore, MD.

[16] Minutes of the Washington Conference.

[17] Richard Paul Fuke, *Imperfect Equality, African Americans and the Confines of White Racial Attitudes in Post-Emancipation Maryland*, (New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 1999), p. 24.

[18] As cited in Brewer Kathleen Thompson, "The Freedmen's Bureau Schools of Frederick and Washington Counties, Maryland," p. 21.

[19] Washington Co. School Board minutes 1865-1887, original manuscript, Washington Co. School Board Office, Hagerstown, MD.

[20] Thompson, p. 22, citing John Kimball to Pvt. Major Stuart Eldridge, AAA Gen'l., April 1, 1868 in Monthly Reports District of Columbia, Oct. 1865-June 1868, (National Archives, M803, Roll 16).

[21] Washington Co. School Board minutes 1865-1887.

[22] Thompson, pp. 22-23, citing Joseph A. Matthew to John Kimball, Feb. 17, 1869 in Registers of Letter Received vol. 1, Jan. 1868-Dec. 1869 (National Archives, M1056, Roll 4). The 1870 U.S. Population Census for Washington Co. showed 63 black landowners outside of the Hagerstown districts.

[23] Thompson, p. 4.

[24] J. Thomas Scharf, *History of Western Maryland*, Vol. II, (originally published 1882, reprint, Baltimore, MD: Regional Publishing Co., 1968), pp. 976-977; similar numbers were found in Frederick County in 1880, 158 school buildings with 153 white elementary schools and 24 colored schools, leaving only 5 buildings for the colored schools, Scharf, Vol. I, p. 370.

[25] Fields, p. 134.

[26] Fields, p. 176.

[27] The reason for this decline is unknown. However, it may be related to the reduced dominance of mid-Atlantic wheat due to increased production in the mid-West.

[28] T.J.C. Williams, *History of Washington County, Maryland*, Vol I., p. 551. The "Colored M.E. Church" of Sharpsburg was also known as Tolson's Chapel.

[29] All population census information is from the HeritageQuest Online database.

[30] George W. McDaniel, *Black Historical Resources in Upper Western Montgomery County*, (Sugarloaf Regional Trails publication, 1979), p. 31.

[31] Boonsboro Odd Fellow, November 29, 1866, as cited in Herrin, p. 58.

[32] Washington Co. Land Record, Liber LBN 1, folio 712.

[33] Washington Co. Land Record, Liber GBO 84, folio 305.

[34] Ledger of Sharpsburg Tannery, 1837-1851, p. 149, rare books section, Western Maryland Room, Washington Co. Free Library, Hagerstown, MD.

[35] Washington Co. Land Record, Liber WMcKK 4, folio 30.

[36] www.itd.nps.gov/cwss/

[37] When Harriet Hess died in 1891, she was described in the *Antietam Valley Record* as a former slave of "Squire" Jacob Miller of Sharpsburg (AVR, August 28, 1891).

[38] Rev. Ralph Monroe recalled that Middleton was thought by members of Tolson's Chapel to have been a slave of the Piper family however this has not been confirmed.

[39] Washington Co. School Board minutes 1865-1887.

[40] J. Thomas Scharf, *History of Western Maryland*, (originally published Philadelphia: Louis H. Everts, 1882; Electronic Edition, Heritage Books, Inc., 2002), p. 1210.

[41] *Sharpsburg Enterprise*, Dec. 23, 1881.

[42] Listed in the Inventory of Artifacts found in Tolson's Chapel, Dr. David H. Wallace, February 27, 2003.

[43] Minutes of the Washington Conference.

[44] John R. Tolson Memoir/obituary, *Methodist Episcopal General Minutes*, Vol. XIII, 1870-1871, p. 37.

[45] This information was given by historian J. Thomas Scharf, writing in 1882, p. 1210.

[46] Minutes of the Washington Conference; Methodist Episcopal General Minutes, 1879, Jarrett Bowman, p. 38.

[47] Minutes of the Washington Conference.
[48] Based on a list in Scharf, p. 1210 with annotations from the "Preacher File," Lovely Lane Museum and Archives, Baltimore, MD.
[49] When Peter Miller died in 1856, he owned "1 Colored Woman," appraised at $250.00. According to Peter's will, Nancy became the property of his son, Andrew Miller; Washington Co. Will Book E, page 325 and List of Appraisements Book T, page 6.
[50] Nancy Campbell's Certificate of Freedom, issued by the county as proof that she was no longer a slave, described her as "5 feet 1 ½ inches high, of a dark complexion, without perceptible marks upon her person." Washington Co. Land Record, Book IN 14, page 129.
[51] Listed in the Inventory of Artifacts found in Tolson's Chapel, Dr. David H. Wallace, February 27, 2003.
[52] Washington Co. Will Book H, page 404.
[53] Certification of Ownership, Washington County record, #1921, Maryland Manuscripts, University of Maryland, Archives & Manuscripts Department.
[54] Fred W. Cross, "Antietam Sept. 17, 1862," manuscript, 1921 and 1924, (no page numbers), Antietam National Battlefield library.
[55] U.S. Population Census records, 1860. John Otto's farm was in the line of much of the final phase of the Antietam battle, September 17, 1862.
[56] Washington Co. Land Record, Liber WMcKK 5, folio 124.
[57] *Sharpsburg Enterprise*, Dec. 27, 1881.
[58] Letter, Capt. J.C. Brubaker to Kimball, Supt. Of Education, March 28, 1868, National Archives, M2056, Roll #5, as cited in Herrin, p. 61.
[59] Letter, E.A. Johnson to Rev. John Kimball, April 6, 1868, National Archives, M1056, Roll #7, as cited in Herrin, p. 62.
[60] Letter, John Kimball to [unknown], March 31, 1868, National Archives, M1055, Roll #4, as cited in Herrin, p. 61.
[61] Teacher's Monthly School Report, April 1868, National Archives, RG 105, M1056, Roll #7, researched by Brewer Kathleen Thompson.
[62] Sharpsburg Freedmen's Bureau School Reports, April 1868-August 1869, M1056, National Archives, as cited by Brewer Kathleen Thompson, pp. 21-22.
[63] Teacher's Monthly School Report, July and August, 1869, National Archives, M1056, Roll #17, as cited in Herrin, p. 63.
[64] Washington Co. School Board Minutes, 1865-1908.
[65] Scharf, p. 976. Some of James Simons' school books survive in a collection of books found in Virginia Cook's house after her death. These are being catalogued but remain in private ownership.
[66] Washington Co. School Board Minutes, 1865-1908.
[67] *Antietam Wavelet*, Sept. 29, 1888.
[68] *Antietam Valley Reporter*, Nov. 20, 1891.
[69] Washington Co. Land Record, Liber 88, folio 107.
[70] Washington Co. Land Record, Liber 92, folio 361.
[71] Washington Co. School Board Minutes, 1865-1908.
[72] Interviews with Rev. Ralph Monroe, February and November 2002. The Gray/Robinson/Calaman house burned ca. 1945.
[73] Washington Co. Land Record, Liber GBO 84, folio 304.
[74] The newspaper described Mahala Thomas as a member of the Reformed Church where her funeral was preached, however she may have been buried in the only "black" cemetery in town regardless of denomination.
[75] Minutes of the Washington Conference.
[76] *Antietam Valley Reporter*, May 15, 1891.

[77] Washington Co. Will Book 23, page 18.
[78] Interview with Rev. Ralph Monroe, February 2002.
[79] Interview with Rev. Ralph Monroe, November 2002.
[80] Hand-written, undated letter by Virginia Cook, Sharpsburg Historical Society, Sharpsburg, MD.
[81] *The Morning Herald*, Nov. 8, 1976; note all quotes in this paragraph are from this article. The coal-burning "Heatrola" stove now in the chapel replaced the wood-burning pot-bellied stove after 1976, however the location of the old wood stove is known. The bell was removed, according to Miss Cook, because the cupola could no longer hold its weight and was sold to Douglas Reel, whose family still lives in the area. This occurred prior to 1976 as the bell does not appear in a newspaper photograph published in that year.
[82] Hand-written, undated letter by Virginia Cook, Sharpsburg Historical Society, Sharpsburg, MD.
[83] Martha V. Hollins, June 1999, Tolson's Chapel vertical file, Lovely Lane Museum and Archives, Baltimore, MD.
[84] Washington Co. Land Record, Liber 1786, folio 503.

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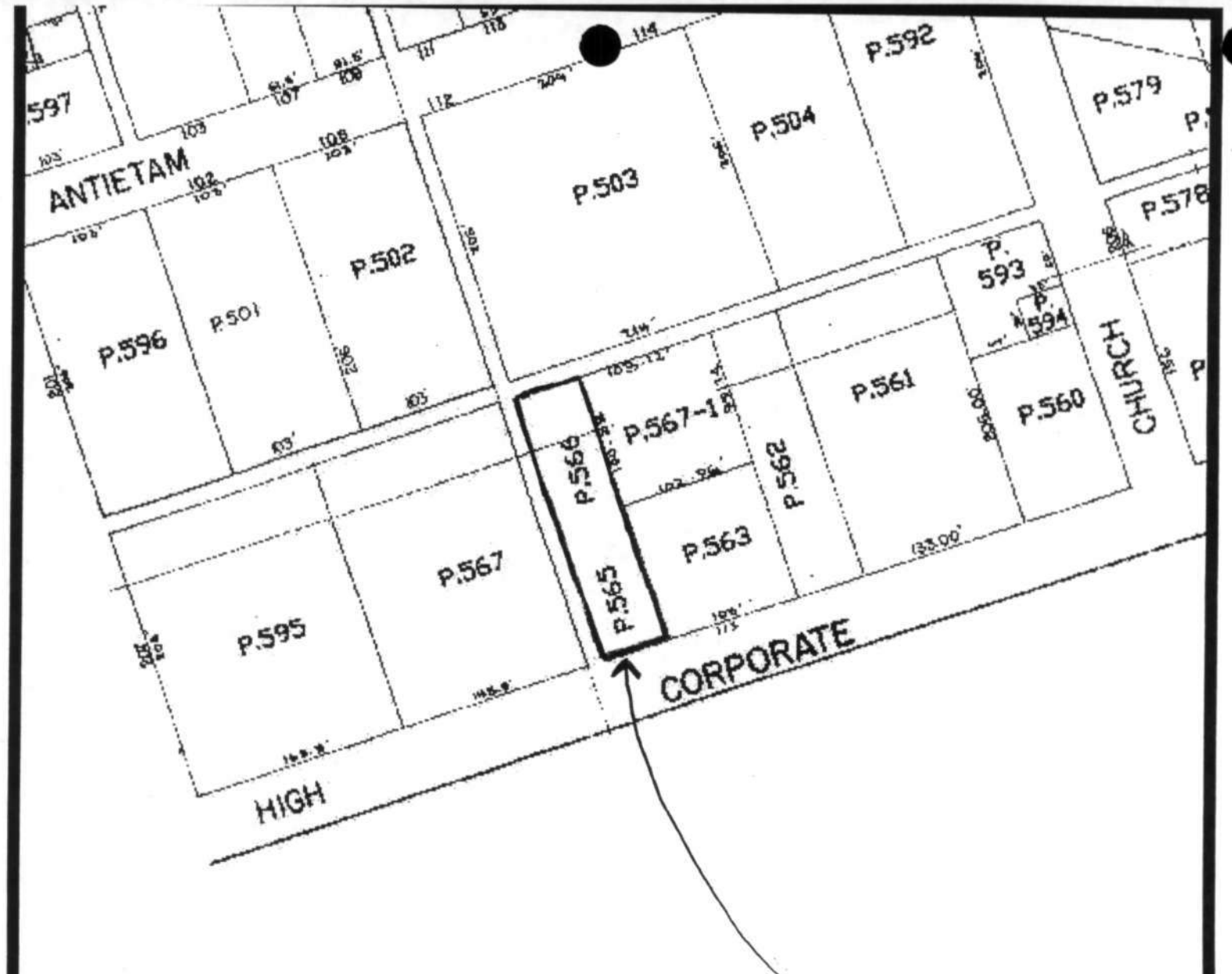
Geographical Data

Verbal Boundary Description

The nominated property is described as Parcels 565 and 566 on Washington County tax map No. 762.

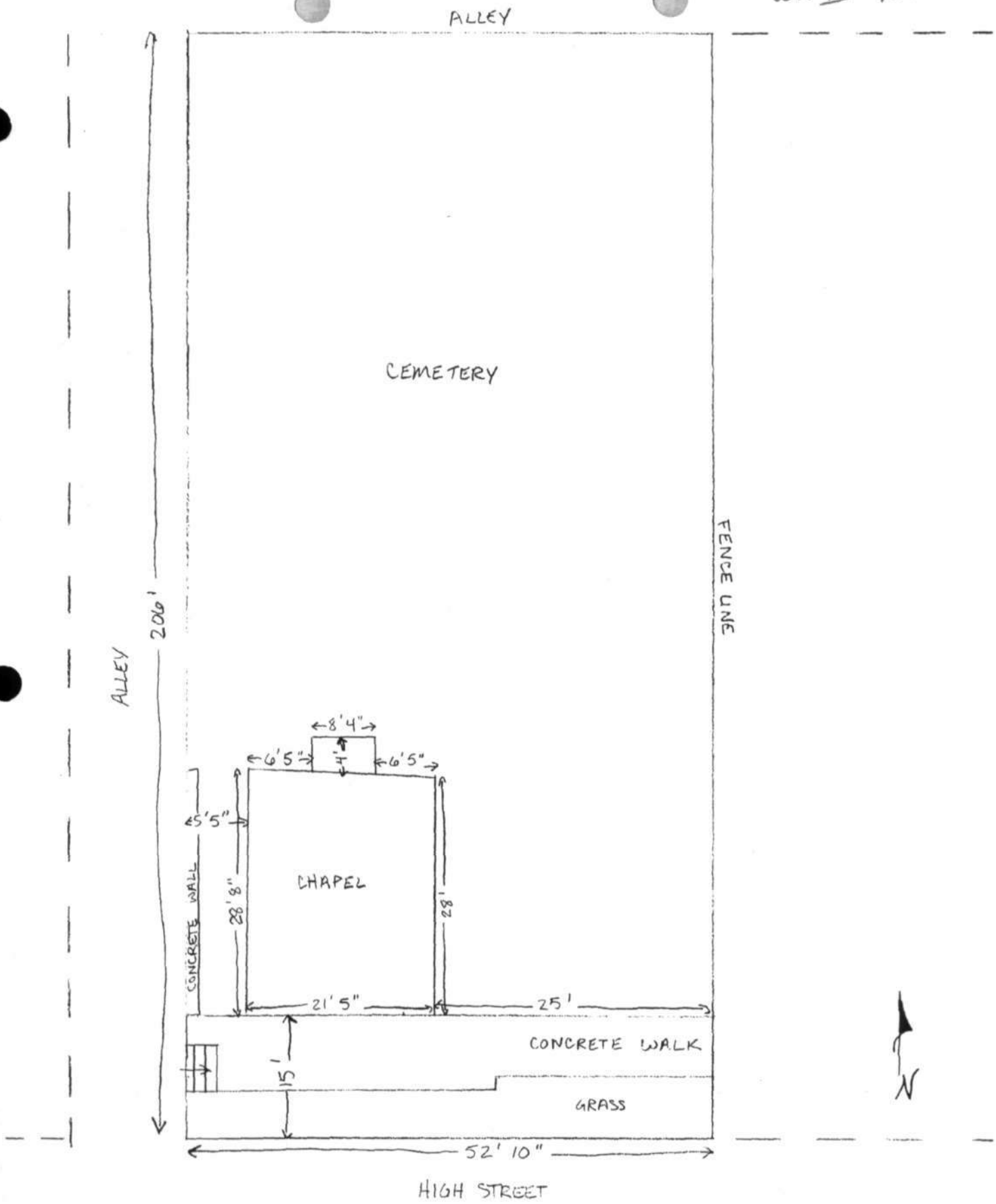
Boundary Justification

The boundary is the historic boundary of the chapel and cemetery lot.



TOLSON'S CHAPEL, WA-II-702
BOUNDARY MAP
WASHINGTON CO. TAX MAP 762
MARYLAND

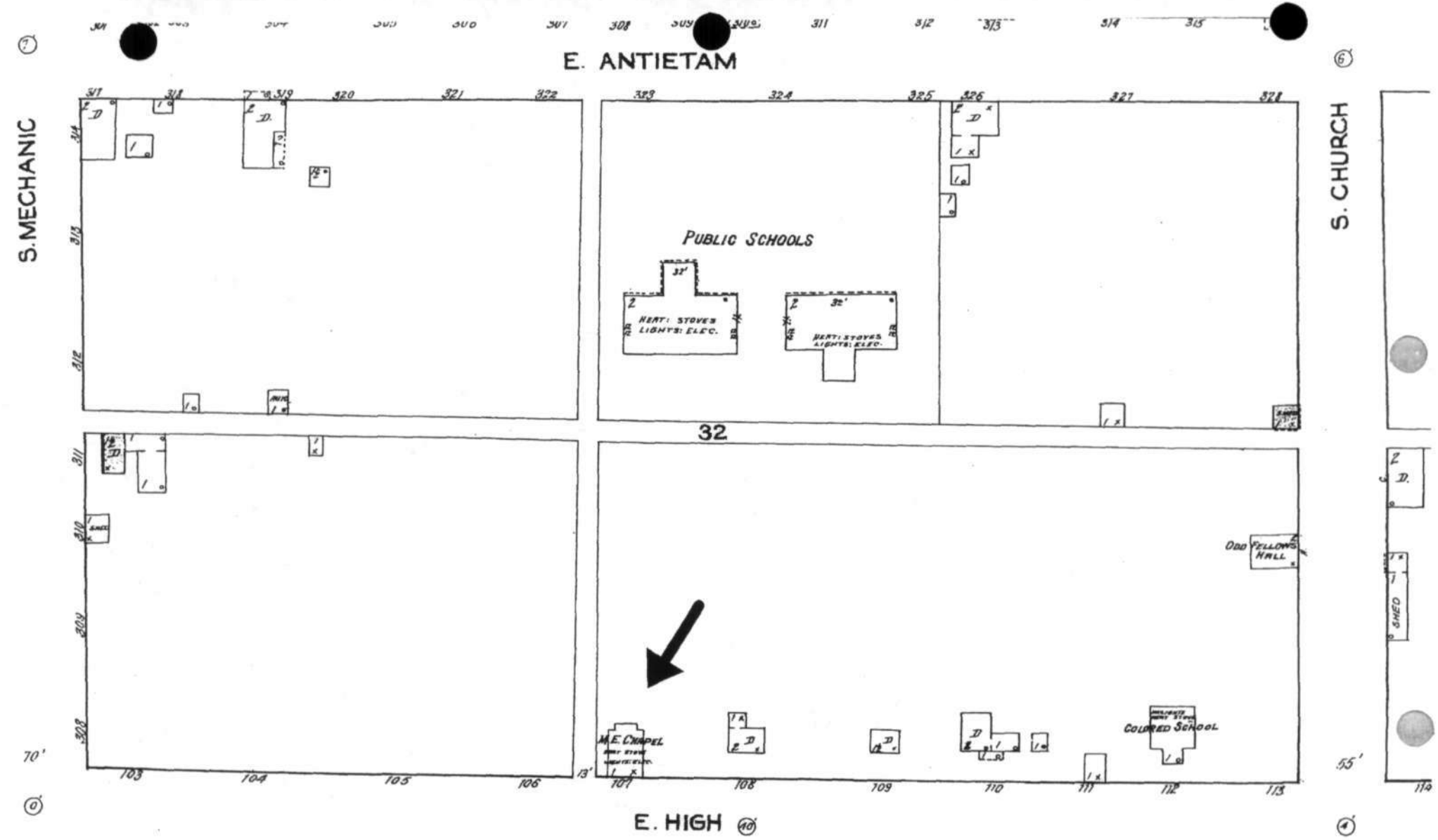
WA-II-702



TOLSON'S CHAPEL SITE PLAN (NOT TO SCALE)
16 SEPTEMBER 2003
WASHINGTON CO., MD WA-II-702

Southeast Quadrant of Sharpsburg, 1877. (Titus Atlas of Washington County)

TOLSON'S CHAPEL, WASHINGTON CO., WA-II-702



1922 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of Sharpsburg, sheet 5. (Enoch Pratt Free Library, online database)

TOLSON'S CHAPEL, WA-II-702
WASHINGTON CO., MD