

WA-II-702

NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK NOMINATION

NPS Form 10-934 (Rev. 12-2015)

OMB Control No. 1024-0276 (Exp. 01/31/2019)

TOLSON'S CHAPEL AND SCHOOL

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National Historic Landmarks Nomination Form

1. NAME AND LOCATION OF PROPERTY

Historic Name: Tolson's Chapel and School

Other Name/Site Number: American Union School; Methodist Episcopal Church, Sharpsburg
(National Register Reference#: 08001012)(Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties #WA-II-702) (HABS MD-1202)

Street and Number (if applicable): 111 East High Street

City/Town: Sharpsburg

County: Washington

State: MD

2. SIGNIFICANCE DATA

NHL Criteria: 1

NHL Criteria Exceptions: 1

NHL Theme(s): II. Creating Social Institutions and Movements
3. Religious Institutions
III. Expressing Cultural Values
1. Educational and Intellectual Currents

Period(s) of Significance: 1866-1899

Significant Person(s) (only Criterion 2): Not applicable

Cultural Affiliation (only Criterion 6): Not applicable

Designer/Creator/Architect/Builder: Unknown

Historic Contexts: The Era of Reconstruction, 1861-1900

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement. We are collecting this information under the authority of the Historic Sites Act of 1935 (16 U.S.C. 461-467) and 36 CFR part 65. Your response is required to obtain or retain a benefit. We will use the information you provide to evaluate properties nominated as National Historic Landmarks. We may not conduct, or sponsor and you are not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number. OMB has approved this collection of information and assigned Control No. 1024-0276.

Estimated Burden Statement. Public reporting burden is 2 hours for an initial inquiry letter and 344 hours for NPS Form 10-934 (per response), including the time it takes to read, gather and maintain data, review instructions and complete the letter/form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate, or any aspects of this form, to the Information Collection Clearance Officer, National Park Service, 12201 Sunrise Valley Drive, Mail Stop 242, Reston, VA 20192. Please do not send your form to this address.

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3. WITHHOLDING SENSITIVE INFORMATION

Does this nomination contain sensitive information that should be withheld under Section 304 of the National Historic Preservation Act?

Yes

No [is checked]

4. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

1. Acreage of Property: 0.23 acres

2. Use either Latitude/Longitude Coordinates or the UTM system:

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates (enter coordinates to 6 decimal places):
Datum if other than WGS84: not applicable

	Latitude:	Longitude:
A:	39.456697°	-77.746711°
B:	39.456729°	-77.746566°
C:	39.456163°	-77.746331°
D:	39.456120°	-77.746485°

OR

UTM References:

Zone	Easting	Northing
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3. Verbal Boundary Description:

The National Historic Landmark boundary encompasses Parcels 565 and 566 on Washington County, Maryland tax map No. 762. Both parcels were part of Lot 104 in the original plan of the Town of Sharpsburg, Maryland. East High Street forms the southern boundary of the nominated area, and unnamed alleys mark its western and northern edges. The eastern boundary is the property line separating Parcels 565 and 566 from the adjacent lot.

4. Boundary Justification:

The boundary includes all of the land that was owned by the Tolson's Chapel congregation during the period of significance. The property, which includes a church/school building and a cemetery, retains integrity to its period of significance.

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5. SIGNIFICANCE STATEMENT AND DISCUSSION**INTRODUCTION: SUMMARY STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

Tolson's Chapel and School in Sharpsburg, Maryland is nationally significant under NHL Criterion 1 for its outstanding ability to convey the history of African American institution-building during Reconstruction, one of six historic contexts identified in the National Historic Landmarks Theme Study, *The Era of Reconstruction, 1861-1900* (2017). As an exceptionally well-preserved example of a post-Civil War African American church, cemetery, and school, Tolson's Chapel stands as a testament to the determination of African Americans in the former slave-holding states to build independent institutions after the end of slavery. These institutions provided mutual support, aided African Americans' efforts to improve their economic fortunes, supported their participation in civic life, and declared their autonomy from whites. Moreover, the schools that African Americans established during Reconstruction laid the foundation for public education throughout the South and the border states, transforming education in the region for people of both races.

Erected in 1866 by an African American Methodist congregation that formed the previous year, the modest log-and-frame church powerfully illustrates African Americans' dedication to forming their own churches where they could worship independently from white-led churches and hold positions of leadership. Churches were vital institutions in African American communities after the Civil War and served as springboards for political organization and for establishing other institutions, including cemeteries and schools. Immediately after Emancipation, African Americans throughout the former slave-holding states demonstrated a strong desire for schools where they could learn to read and write, a privilege largely denied them before the Civil War. In Sharpsburg, the local African American community organized a school in Tolson's Chapel, and, in 1868 and 1869, secured teachers from Northern benevolent societies and from the Freedmen's Bureau, a federal agency established in part to assist those who had been formerly enslaved. Liquid slate blackboards from this period remain on the walls of the church, attesting to its use as a school.

Tolson's Chapel's significance in the transition from slavery to freedom has special resonance because of its proximity to the Battle of Antietam (1862), which took place in and just north of Sharpsburg. The Confederate Army's retreat at the conclusion of the battle prompted President Abraham Lincoln to issue the preliminary Emancipation Proclamation, which defined ending slavery as a primary goal of the Civil War and set the stage for Maryland and other slave-holding states within the Union to abolish slavery.

The period of significance for Tolson's Chapel and School begins in 1866, when African Americans in Sharpsburg constructed the church, and ends in 1899, when the building ceased being used as a school. This period covers the span of time when the property's historical associations and physical presence exceptionally illustrate the establishment and development of African American institutions after emancipation. Criterion Exception 1 applies because the building was constructed and used by a religious group. The property meets the requirements of Exception 1 because its national significance derives from its historical association with educational and religious institution-building that embodied African Americans' claims to equality and autonomy during the era of Reconstruction.

The property was individually listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 2008 at the state and local levels of significance. It is also a contributing building in the locally significant, National Register-listed Sharpsburg Historic District (2008).

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PROVIDE RELEVANT PROPERTY-SPECIFIC HISTORY, HISTORICAL CONTEXT, AND THEMES. JUSTIFY CRITERIA, EXCEPTIONS, AND PERIODS OF SIGNIFICANCE LISTED IN SECTION 2.**Historical Background***Slavery and Civil War in Sharpsburg, Maryland, 1860-1865*

In 1860, African Americans accounted for approximately ten percent of the population of Washington County, Maryland, and a little less than half of the county's Black population was enslaved. The small percentage of enslaved people reflects a broader pattern in the mountainous, western part of the state, where grain-based agriculture did not support extensive use of slave labor and there was a substantial minority of German-American migrants from non-slave-holding Pennsylvania, many of whom opposed the practice of human bondage. Slaveholdings tended to be small, with only one or two adult slaves in most slave-owning households. Most enslaved people in the Sharpsburg area performed agricultural labor, but some worked as ferrymen, blacksmiths, or masons.¹

The 1,435 free Black residents of Washington County in 1860 included those who were born free, as well as formerly enslaved people who purchased their own freedom or had been manumitted. Census records indicate that most free Blacks in the Sharpsburg area worked as servants, housekeepers, farm hands, or "laborers." Most had personal property valued between \$25 and \$50, and about ten free Blacks owned real estate, including Samuel Craig, who would later donate the land for Tolson's Chapel. Although they had their freedom, they did not enjoy the same rights, privileges, and opportunities as whites. Free Black Marylanders could not vote or serve on juries and could be sentenced to forced labor for minor crimes. Like other slave-holding states, Maryland restricted African Americans' economic and employment opportunities, religious gatherings, and ownership of firearms and dogs. Moreover, they frequently encountered opposition from whites when they attempted to purchase land or establish their own institutions.²

Despite being a slave state, Maryland did not join the Confederacy. During the war, federal troops were a regular presence in and around Sharpsburg because Union supply routes passed through the area. The fighting came to the town in September 1862, when Confederate General Robert E. Lee launched an offensive into western Maryland. On September 16, Lee's forces occupied Sharpsburg and prepared to confront the Union Army, which was advancing on the town under the command of General George B. McClellan. On September 17, the two armies clashed amidst the farms to the north and east of town along Antietam Creek. The Union succeeded in repelling the Confederate Army's advance into Maryland, and Lee retreated to Virginia on September 18. During the Battle of Antietam, the two armies together sustained over 23,000 casualties, more than in any other single day of fighting during the Civil War.

¹ *Population of the United States in 1860; Compiled from the Original Returns of the Eighth Census* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1864), 214, <https://www.census.gov/content/census/en/library/publications/1864/dec/1860a.html>; Edith B. Wallace, "Reclaiming Forgotten History: Preserving Rural African-American Cultural Resources in Washington County, Maryland" (master's thesis, Goucher College, 2003), 10-19.

² Wallace, "Reclaiming Forgotten History," 11; Dean Herrin, "Antietam Rising: The Civil War and Its Legacy in Sharpsburg, Maryland, 1860-1900" (prepared for National Park Service, Antietam National Battlefield Park, March 2002), 58; U.S. Population Census, 1860, Maryland, Washington County, Sharpsburg District, 191-249, in Ancestry.com. *1860 United States Federal Census* [database on-line] (Provo, Utah: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2009). On free Blacks in Maryland generally, see Barbara Jeanne Fields, *Slavery and Freedom on the Middle Ground: Maryland during the Nineteenth Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 35-37, 63-89.

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Emancipation and Reconstruction in the Southern and Border States, 1864-1870

Following the Union's success at the Battle of Antietam, President Abraham Lincoln issued the preliminary Emancipation Proclamation, which warned the Confederacy of his intention to free all persons held as slaves within the rebellious states as of January 1, 1863. Although the proclamation had little practical effect, it had symbolic significance and signaled a fundamental change in the United States government's position on slavery. In its wake, the war was no longer simply about preserving the Union but was about ending slavery as well. Lincoln's proclamation explicitly did not apply to Maryland, Delaware, Missouri, Kentucky, and the area that would soon become West Virginia, all places that permitted slavery but had not joined the Confederacy. A general emancipation that included these states, Lincoln feared, would weaken their support for the Union or provoke secession. Nevertheless, the Emancipation Proclamation exerted pressure on these states to end slavery. Starting in 1863, the year that the Proclamation took effect, the United States government began recruiting African American soldiers and guaranteed freedom to enslaved people who completed their enlistments, further eroding slavery in the border states.³

As historian Eric Foner notes in his study of Reconstruction, "Freedom came in different ways to different parts of the South," a statement as true of the border states as it was of the states that seceded. Enslaved people throughout the Southern and border states claimed their freedom by escaping to Union encampments or to free states, and some who were enslaved in the Confederate states gained their freedom during the war as a result of Union occupation.⁴ Among the border states, West Virginia adopted a gradual emancipation plan as a condition of statehood in 1863, but Maryland was the first border state to implement a general emancipation. In 1864, thanks in part to votes from Maryland soldiers in the field and loyalty oaths that barred supporters of the Confederacy from voting, Maryland voters narrowly approved a new constitution that abolished slavery.⁵ For the majority of enslaved individuals outside of Maryland, however, freedom came in December 1865, with the ratification of the Thirteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which outlawed slavery throughout the United States.

During and immediately after the Civil War, the Republican Party generally advocated for basic rights for people who had been enslaved and supported punitive measures for the states and individuals that supported the Confederacy.⁶ In March 1865, in anticipation of the end of the war and of slavery, the Republican-dominated Congress established the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, more commonly known as the Freedmen's Bureau. Intended as a temporary agency, its overarching goal was to shepherd the South through the transition from a slave society to a free labor society. To that end, the bureau stationed agents backed by the U.S. Army throughout the former Confederate states, where they performed a variety of tasks aimed at assisting the freed people, white refugees, and conservative Unionists.⁷ Agents mediated employment disputes, challenged unfair labor arrangements, performed marriages, assisted the poor and infirm, helped establish

³ Fields, *Slavery and Freedom*, 117-130.

⁴ Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877*, New American Nation Series (New York: Harper & Row, 1988), 77 (quotation); Gregory P. Downs and Kate Masur, *The Era of Reconstruction, 1861-1900: A National Historic Landmarks Theme Study*, National Historic Landmarks Theme Study (Washington, D.C.: National Historic Landmarks Program, National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, 2017), <https://www.nps.gov/nhl/learn/themes/Reconstruction.pdf>, 3-4.

⁵ Fields, *Slavery and Freedom*, 131-132; Jean H. Baker, *The Politics of Continuity: Maryland Political Parties from 1858 to 1870* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), 131-132. The Missouri state constitution that abolished slavery was passed by the constitutional convention in January 1865 but was not ratified until June.

⁶ Foner, *Reconstruction*, 241.

⁷ Initially, the Freedmen's Bureau did not operate in most of Maryland, including Washington County and Sharpsburg. However, in early 1866, it expanded operations into all of Maryland following reports that African Americans were being treated unfairly. Richard Paul Fuke, *Imperfect Equality: African Americans and the Confines of White Racial Attitudes in Post-Emancipation Maryland*, 1st ed., *Reconstructing America Series*, no. 2 (New York: Fordham University Press, 1999), 23-40.

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schools, and worked to ensure legal protections for freed people and for conservative Unionists. However, neither the bureau's staff nor its budget was adequate to its far-reaching mission, which was itself contested, controversial, and at times contradictory. Moreover, many agents brought racist and paternalistic attitudes to their work with African Americans and did not always act in the interest of advancing equality.⁸

African American men in the former Confederacy gained the right to vote in the late 1860s under new state constitutions that instituted Black male suffrage. Under these new constitutions, voters elected Black men to political office, and the Republican Party controlled Southern state governments and Southern representation to Congress in the late 1860s and early 1870s. White Southern Democrats, who opposed civil rights for African Americans and resented federal intervention in state policies and politics, regained control of the state governments in the mid-1870s by committing election fraud and by intimidating and attacking Black voters.⁹

In the border states, however, Democrats either never lost control of state politics or re-took control soon after the end of the war. In Maryland, for instance, Democrats lost the legislature in 1861 but won a majority in the elections of 1866 by forming common cause with conservative Unionists in opposition to civil and voting rights for African Americans. Because Democrats in Maryland and other border states blocked efforts to institute Black male suffrage, African Americans in the border states did not gain the right to vote until the Fifteenth Amendment was ratified in 1870.¹⁰

African American Churches and Cemeteries during Reconstruction: Tolson's Chapel and Cemetery, 1864-1888

When African American Methodists built their own church in Sharpsburg in 1866, they were part of a broader historical trend of African American church-building during Reconstruction. Churches were among the first institutions that African Americans organized after the end of slavery. Before Emancipation, whites generally insisted upon supervising religious gatherings of enslaved and free Blacks, and many white preachers presented Biblical arguments enjoining slaves to obey their masters. Despite restrictions on independent worship and white preachers who expounded proslavery interpretations of the Bible, Black Christians cultivated distinctive worship styles and theology that comforted and strengthened them during enslavement and represented a form of resistance to white authority.¹¹

According to the National Park Service (NPS) Theme Study titled *The Era of Reconstruction, 1861-1900*, "After the war, black Southerners left white-led churches in droves, forming their own churches where they could worship as they chose, outside the supervision of whites who so often treated them disrespectfully." Most of the African American churches established during Reconstruction were Baptist or Methodist, in part because these denominations "provided the greatest opportunities for independent black institutions headed by black leadership." Opportunities for religious leadership were more readily available in the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church, the African Methodist Episcopal Zion (AMEZ) Church, the Colored Methodist Episcopal (CME) Church, and Black Baptist associations than they were in the white-led Methodist Episcopal Church, but Black Methodists claimed what autonomy they could within the denomination. Organized in 1864, the Washington Conference, which included churches in western Maryland, was one of the first two all-Black

⁸ Foner, *Reconstruction*, 142-144; Paul A. Cimbal and Randall M. Miller, eds., *The Freedmen's Bureau and Reconstruction: Reconsiderations*, *Reconstructing America* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1999), xiii-xxx.

⁹ Downs and Masur, *The Era of Reconstruction*, 6-7, 45-46, 48-50, 80-81.

¹⁰ Foner *Reconstruction*, 421-423; Fields, *Slavery and Freedom*, 93, 110, 131-137; Baker, *Politics of Continuity*, 139-166, 171. Once in power, the Democratic majority in the 1867 Maryland legislature quickly repealed the loyalty oath requirements.

¹¹ Downs and Masur, *The Era of Reconstruction*, 25-26.

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annual conferences established within the Methodist Church.¹² The conference conducted its first meeting in Baltimore in late October of 1864, with the close of the meeting coinciding with the end of slavery in Maryland. Although the African American conferences remained under the authority of white bishops, these conferences had some degree of autonomy from white leadership, including the ability to appoint preachers.¹³

In 1865, the Washington Conference appointed John R. Tolson to the Hagerstown, Maryland circuit, which at that time included Sharpsburg. Tolson organized Black Methodists in Sharpsburg into a congregation in 1865, and continued to serve the congregation until 1867, when he transferred to another circuit. In late 1866, the congregation laid the cornerstone for a church building on East High Street, at the corner of a quarter-acre lot owned by Samuel Craig, an African American man who had been a free landowner in 1860. The log-and-frame church was completed in late 1866 or early 1867 and was formally dedicated in the fall of 1867. In November 1867, Samuel Craig donated the portion of the lot where the building stood to the congregation, which acquired the remainder of the lot in 1883 for \$75.¹⁴ By 1875, the congregation in Sharpsburg had named the church after Tolson, who died in 1870 at the age of thirty.¹⁵

In the decade following Tolson's departure in 1867, the preacher assigned to Sharpsburg changed everyone to three years, a typical practice in the Methodist Church at the time. In the early 1870s, the church likely had somewhere between thirty and sixty regular attendees and had Sunday schools with as many as fifty-five students. Those who worshipped at Tolson's Chapel in the 1870s and 1880s included formerly enslaved people as well as those who had been free all their lives. Some congregants lived in the town of Sharpsburg, while others lived and worked on nearby farms.¹⁶ Because of the Methodist tradition of itinerant preachers, day-to-day leadership fell to lay persons. In 1868, white teacher Ezra A. Johnson described Samuel Craig as the "pastor" of the church, indicating that Craig was one of the lay leaders of Tolson's Chapel as well as one of its benefactors.¹⁷

The collective work of African American men and women built and sustained Tolson's Chapel and Black churches throughout the former slave-holding states during Reconstruction. Despite limited economic resources and, in many cases, hostility from local whites, congregations worked together to acquire land and build church edifices, contributing time, materials, and money. Black landowners often played crucial roles in establishing churches, particularly when local whites refused to sell land to Black congregations. Samuel Craig, who donated the land for Tolson's Chapel, was free before the war, and two of the other church trustees, David Simons and John Francis, are known to have been free before the war as well.¹⁸ Though excluded from the

¹² Downs and Masur, *The Era of Reconstruction*, 26-27 (quotations, p. 26); Dwight W. Culver, *Negro Segregation in the Methodist Church* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1953), 52-53; Fuke, *Imperfect Equality*, 176-178.

¹³ Edie Wallace and Paula S. Reed, *Tolson's Chapel*, National Register of Historic Places Nomination (2008), Section 8: 3-4, 8; James S. Thomas, *Methodism's Racial Dilemma: The Story of the Central Jurisdiction* (Nashville, Tennessee: Abington Press, 1992), 45.

¹⁴ Wallace and Reed, *Tolson's Chapel*, Section 8:7-8.

¹⁵ Wallace and Reed, *Tolson's Chapel*, Section 8:8. The exact date when the church was named "Tolson's Chapel" is unknown, but several Sunday school hymnals found in the church have the inscription, "Sharpsburg T C 1875," suggesting that the name was in use by the mid-1870s.

¹⁶ Wallace and Reed, *Tolson's Chapel*, Section 8:8-9. As noted in the National Register nomination, the church in Sharpsburg changed circuits several times in the late 1860s and early 1870s. Until 1871, the conference minutes as published in the *Minutes of the Annual Conferences of the Methodist Episcopal Church* did not provide statistical information for individual churches (also known as stations) within each circuit, so it is difficult to track the Sharpsburg church prior to that date. The number of people who attended the church was likely greater than the number of members, since membership required more than regular attendance.

¹⁷ Ezra Johnson to Captain Brubaker, April 3, 1868 (Roll #5), Records of the Superintendent of Education and of the Division of Education, District of Columbia, Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865-1872, M1056, National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) [hereafter cited as Records of the Superintendent of Education, Freedmen's Bureau, NARA].

¹⁸ Wallace and Reed, *Tolson's Chapel*, Section 8:7-8. Various primary sources give different spellings for "Simons" when

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ministry and formal leadership positions in the church, women organized events to raise funds to support the church's activities, purchase books, buy land, or expand buildings. At Christmastime in 1881, for instance, the women of Tolson's Chapel organized a "fair and festival" to benefit the church, selling supper and desserts. Nancy Campbell/Camell, a formerly enslaved woman who was manumitted in 1859 and was a member of both the Methodist Church and a Dunker congregation, donated a Bible to Tolson's Chapel in 1883 and bequeathed twenty dollars to the church.¹⁹

Not only places of worship, African American churches were venues for social interactions, cultural expression, and recreation. They also played an important role in African Americans' efforts to assert their rights as equal citizens during Reconstruction. Because they owned and controlled their churches, they could use the buildings for political meetings and discussions with minimal interference from the local white community. Ministers and lay leaders such as trustees and deacons were often community as well as religious leaders and adjudicated disputes among congregants in order to avoid the discriminatory, white-dominated court system.²⁰

Many rural African American churches, Tolson's Chapel among them, expanded their role as community institutions by establishing cemeteries. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Southern whites created municipal cemeteries to accommodate the populations of growing towns and either segregated the cemeteries by race or excluded African American burials altogether. In response, Black churches, fraternal orders, and benevolent organizations created their own cemeteries as a means of ensuring access to proper burial places and respectful treatment of graves, neither of which was guaranteed in cemeteries operated by municipal governments or white churches.²¹ The Tolson's Chapel congregation purchased the land surrounding the church for \$75 in 1883, perhaps not coincidentally the same year that the Town of Sharpsburg established a municipal cemetery on the outskirts of town. The first documented burial at Tolson's Chapel is that of Mehalay Thomas, who lived next door to the church with her son, William H. Gray, and his family, but the cemetery may have been in use for several years before that.²² The Tolson's Chapel cemetery illustrates the congregation's commitment to caring for their members in death as in life and the continued development of African American institutions during Reconstruction.

Epilogue: History and Preservation of Tolson's Chapel Methodist Episcopal Church, 1889-2018

The Tolson's Chapel congregation remained active through the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. They made several improvements to the building, held revivals and fairs, and established a chapter of the Epworth League (a Methodist youth group). Starting in the 1950s, however, more and more African Americans left Sharpsburg, and the congregation of Tolson's Chapel slowly dwindled as a result. The population decline in

referring to David Simons and his family. This nomination uses "Simons," the spelling that appears in the family Bible and on the family's gravestones in Tolson's Chapel Cemetery.

¹⁹ Downs and Masur, *The Era of Reconstruction*, 27-28; *Sharpsburg Enterprise*, December 23, 1881, p. 3 (http://mdhistory.msa.maryland.gov/msa_sc5195/msa_sc5195_scm12445/html/msa_sc5195_scm12445-0052.html); Wallace and Reed, *Tolson's Chapel*, Section 8:9

²⁰ Downs and Masur, *The Era of Reconstruction*, 25, 27-28; Leon F. Litwack, *Been in the Storm So Long: The Aftermath of Slavery* (New York: Vintage Books, 1980), 464-471.

²¹ W.E.B. DuBois, *Economic Co-operation Among Negro Americans* (Atlanta: Atlanta University Press, 1907; University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Documenting the American South, 2000 [electronic edition]), 73, 131-134; Leon F. Litwack, *Trouble in Mind: Black Southerners in the Age of Jim Crow* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1998), 236.

²² Wallace and Reed, *Tolson's Chapel*, Section 8:13; Edie Wallace, Paige Phifer, and Paula S. Reed, *Sharpsburg Historic District* (National Register of Historic Places Nomination, 2008), Section 7:1, 28 and Section 8:71; Sharpsburg, Washington County, Maryland, 14D, in Ancestry.com, *1870 United States Federal Census* [database on-line]. (Provo, Utah: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2009

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Sharpsburg followed a broader pattern of Black migration from rural areas, where changes in agriculture resulted in fewer job opportunities, to cities such as Baltimore and Washington, D.C. where the post-World War II economic boom had created jobs in industry and government. By 1976, the church had only three members: Frances and Clarence Monroe and their niece, Virginia Cook, who was in her sixties. The United Methodist Church closed the church in 1994 and deconsecrated the building in 1998, two years after the death of Virginia Cook, the last surviving member.²³

In 2000, Dr. Dean Herrin, National Park Service coordinator of the Catoctin Center for Regional Studies at Frederick Community College, identified the building as a historically significant property while conducting a study of Sharpsburg during and after the Civil War. Two years later, the Save Historic Antietam Foundation (SHAF) accepted ownership of the building from the United Methodist Church. Operating as a committee within the SHAF, the Friends of Tolson's Chapel documented and stabilized the building and cemetery. In 2006, the Friends of Tolson Chapel was established as a separate non-profit organization and purchased the property two years later. Since its formation, the organization has overseen the restoration of the church and cemetery and has received grant assistance from the Maryland Historical Trust and Preservation Maryland.

African American Schools during Early Reconstruction: Tolson's Chapel and Education in Sharpsburg, 1864-1869

During Reconstruction, African Americans throughout the former slave-holding states demonstrated a zeal for education that was intimately connected to their pursuit of freedom and equality. By establishing and supporting schools, they claimed their right to the education that most whites had denied them during slavery, and they asserted their intent to pursue opportunities beyond the menial jobs that white Southerners envisioned for them. The Freedmen's Bureau, Northern benevolent societies, and white teachers provided valuable assistance to some of these schools, but their help was intermittent and unreliable, and their goals often contradicted those of the local Black community. African Americans' commitment to education as expressed through the establishment of local schools was a driving force behind the creation of public-school systems in the former slave-holding states.²⁴

As the home of a school for children and adults in the late 1860s, Tolson's Chapel is strongly associated with African Americans' nationally significant campaign to build schools during Reconstruction. The Black community in and around Sharpsburg, including members of the Tolson's Chapel congregation, organized the school and sacrificed their time and scant economic resources to create and sustain it. The history of the school in Tolson's Chapel illustrates African Americans' struggles to find and support teachers, the limitations and inconsistency of the assistance that they received from the Freedmen's Bureau and Northern aid societies, and students' dedication to learning in the face of numerous obstacles.

African Americans and Education in the Post-Emancipation South

Black Southerners' passion for education was rooted in their experiences before the Civil War, when white

²³ Wallace and Reed, *Tolson's Chapel*, Section 8:12, 14-16; Friends of Tolson's Chapel, "Timeline," <http://www.tolsons chapel.org/history/timeline/> (accessed June 2018).

²⁴ On the significant role that Reconstruction-era schools for African Americans played in establishing systems of public education in the South, see James D. Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 4-32.

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Southerners systematically endeavored to keep them illiterate as a means of justifying slavery and controlling slaves. Teaching enslaved people or free Blacks to read or write was illegal in most of the slave-holding states during the antebellum era. Even in states such as Maryland where educating African Americans was legal, they had little or no access to formal schooling. Nevertheless, a small number of free Blacks and an even smaller number of enslaved people learned to read and write, demonstrating an appreciation for the value of education that would blossom during the Civil War and Reconstruction. Having been largely denied access to education because of slavery, they saw literacy as a means of resisting oppression and recognized that schooling was, as historian Eric Foner notes, "central to the meaning of freedom".²⁵

Education was important to African Americans for more tangible reasons as well. Many wanted to be able to read the Bible or to record family events or personal experiences. Many others sought the ability to read, write, and do arithmetic in order to improve their economic circumstances and open up employment opportunities. Literacy also provided a measure of ~~autonomy from whites and~~ self-protection against fraud by enabling African Americans to read contracts and legal documents for themselves, rather than relying on potentially self-serving interpretations offered by literate whites. In civic life, the ability to read facilitated independent and informed voting. For African Americans starting a new life in a free society, education represented a powerful, and perhaps the most significant, tool in their quest for political, economic, and social equality.²⁶

White Southerners, too, recognized the power of education and as a result, generally opposed schools for Black children and adults. Prior to the Civil War, education in the South was a privilege reserved for planter-class and middle-class whites, who studied in private academies or with tutors. An educated Black population threatened the traditional social order that was rooted in whites' belief in their own racial superiority. As a result, the educational landscape of Sharpsburg after the Civil War was typical of rural towns throughout the South: there was one school that was for white children only. While the number of free schools proliferated in the Northern and Midwestern states in the three decades before the start of the Civil War in 1861, white Southerners displayed little interest in establishing public schools either before or after the war.²⁷ They also used violence and threats to discourage African Americans' educational efforts. Incidents of whites burning freed people's schools, intimidating and assaulting teachers, and threatening students and their parents occurred throughout the Southern and border states in the 1860s and 1870s.²⁸

During Reconstruction, African Americans in the South worked at both the state and local levels to organize schools. In the former Confederacy, Black citizens and legislators were among the most passionate advocates for public education. The state governments that formed in the late 1860s, with support from African American voters, passed laws creating public schools for both races. The creation of Southern public-school systems that included schools for Black children symbolized freed people's aspirations to equality and laid the foundation for universal public education in the region. African Americans in Maryland had fewer opportunities to advocate for public education at the state level in the late 1860s since they did not get the right to vote until the passage of the Fifteenth Amendment in 1870. Maryland's 1864 constitution did authorize a statewide public-

²⁵ Heather Andrea Williams, *Self-Taught: African American Education in Slavery and Freedom*, The John Hope Franklin Series in African American History and Culture (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 7-29, 69-72, 125; Anderson, *Education of Blacks in the South*, 16-18; Ronald E. Butchart, *Schooling the Freed People: Teaching, Learning, and the Struggle for Black Freedom, 1861-1876* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 12-16; Foner, *Reconstruction*, 96-97 (quotation, 96).

²⁶ Foner, *Reconstruction*, 96-97; Williams, *Self-Taught*, 41-44, 69, 76-78; Butchart, *Schooling the Freed People*, 8-12.

²⁷ Anderson, *Education of Blacks*, 4; Williams, *Self-Taught*, 178-179, 187; Butchart, *Schooling the Freed People*, 174-176; J. Thomas Scharf, *History of Western Maryland, Volume 2* (Philadelphia: L.H. Everts, 1882; electronic edition on archive.org, <https://archive.org/details/historyofwestern02scha>), 1205-1206.

²⁸ Butchart, *Schooling the Freed People*, 154-162, 164-170; Williams, *Self-Taught*, 121-125, 149-150.

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school system for both races, but prior to 1872, the state allocated virtually no funding to African American schools and required localities to establish public schools for white children but did not require schools for Black children. Even in the Southern states where African Americans had the vote before 1870, the establishment of the public school systems had little effect at the local level in the 1860s, especially in rural areas, since school construction proceeded slowly due to lack of funding and opposition from white Democrats.²⁹

While statewide public education systems were slow to develop, African Americans throughout the former slave-holding states pursued their educational goals at the local level, holding informal lessons in homes and establishing community schools. They took the initiative to create these schools and were their primary source of support. Despite having limited resources, Black Southerners donated land and buildings, supplied construction materials and labor, provided fuel, purchased books, and found and supported teachers. Although they sought and sometimes received limited assistance from the Freedmen's Bureau or northern benevolent societies, more often than not, the local Black community bore the entire expense of these schools. In light of widespread and dire poverty among African Americans in the former slave-holding states during Reconstruction, their ability to create and sustain schools is a testament to the strength of their devotion to education.³⁰

To house the schools, African Americans constructed purpose-built schoolhouses or used privately owned buildings, but many schools were located in churches that were owned and controlled by Black congregations. A similar pattern had emerged in the Northeast in the 1790s and early 1800s; African American congregations and ministers played key roles in establishing schools, including making the church buildings available as schoolhouses.³¹ In both the early Republic and during Reconstruction, African American churches were well-suited for use as schools in part because their independence provided some protection from retaliation from whites. Moreover, the interior arrangement of most churches was well-suited for use as a school. This same pattern held true in Sharpsburg, where the congregation of Tolson's Chapel offered the use of the church building, which the local community modified for dual use. Occasionally, the Freedmen's Bureau or Northern benevolent societies contributed to the cost of school construction or paid rent for school buildings provided by the community, but this was the exception rather than the rule.³² For example, only for a brief three-month period in 1869, when the Presbyterian Home Mission sponsored teacher John J. Carter, did the Tolson's Chapel congregation receive any compensation for the use of the building as a school. In addition to supplying the building, Sharpsburg residents also procured some books for the schoolchildren, and the Pennsylvania Branch of the American Freedmen's Union Commission (AFUC) sent additional schoolbooks in the spring of 1868,

²⁹ Williams, *Self-Taught*, 193-199; Anderson, *Education of Blacks*, 18-23. On public education in Maryland, see Herrin, "Antietam Rising," 59-60; "Maryland State Department of Education: Origin," *Maryland State Archives*, September 29, 2015, <http://msa.maryland.gov/msa/mdmanual/13sdoe/html/sdoef.html>.

³⁰ Downs and Masur, *The Era of Reconstruction*, 30; Butchart, *Schooling the Freed People*, 3, 18-26, 30-40; Williams, *Self-Taught*, 4-5, 45-66, 105-106; Anderson, *Education of Blacks*, 12-16; Fuke, *Imperfect Equality*, 88-104; Foner, *Reconstruction*, 98-99, 144.

³¹ Gary B. Nash, *Forging Freedom: The Formation of Philadelphia's Black Community, 1720-1840* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1991), pp. 204, 267-269; Christopher Phillips, *Freedom's Port: The African American Community of Baltimore, 1790-1860* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1997), pp. 163-167.

³² Ezra Johnson to Captain Brubaker, April 3, 1868 (Roll #5), Records of the Superintendent of Education, Freedmen's Bureau, NARA. In this letter, Johnson notes that when he arrived in Sharpsburg, the church was not yet ready to house the school, suggesting that the congregation made some modifications to the building in preparation for its dual use. On buildings used for freed people's schools, see Fuke, *Imperfect Equality*, 92-98; Williams, *Self-Taught*, 106-110; Butchart, *Schooling the Freed People*, 31-32. In support of this project, Ayla Mangold and Molly Ricks reviewed Freedmen's Bureau documents relating to school buildings and found that in most Southern states, the majority of school buildings were owned by African Americans.

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when Philadelphian Ezra Johnson arrived in Sharpsburg to teach in the school in Tolson's Chapel.³³

Teachers in Reconstruction-Era African American Schools

The teachers in the earliest schools for freed people were usually literate African Americans from the local area.³⁴ Although written documentation of teachers in the Tolson's Chapel school exists only for the two teachers supplied by the Freedmen's Bureau, several pieces of evidence point to the existence of formal or informal schooling by and for African Americans in Sharpsburg before the first Freedmen's Bureau teacher, Ezra Johnson, began teaching there in April 1868. Johnson's first report to the Freedmen's Bureau, submitted during his first month of teaching, noted that eight of the sixteen regular students were able to read, indicating that someone was teaching Black children in the town prior to his arrival. Similarly, although there is no written documentation of a school in Sharpsburg between Johnson's departure in June 1868 and the arrival of John J. Carter, who was also assigned to Sharpsburg by the Freedmen's Bureau, in July 1869, twenty of Carter's twenty-five students were able to read. The most likely teacher from within the African American community in Sharpsburg was David B. Simons. A free man before the Civil War and a trustee of Tolson's Chapel, Simons was able to read and write in 1860 and taught the public school for African Americans in Sharpsburg in the 1870s.³⁵

Most of the local African American teachers in early schools in the former slave-holding states had no training as teachers, and in some cases, their level of education was not far above that of their students. Moreover, because these teachers relied on tuition payments from an impoverished population, few could make a living solely from teaching, thus limiting the amount of time they could spend in the classroom. Recognizing the limitations of local teachers and of their own economic resources, African Americans throughout the South sought more qualified teachers through the Freedmen's Bureau and Northern missionary and benevolent societies.³⁶ General O. O. Howard, who oversaw the Freedmen's Bureau, strongly believed in the importance of educating freed people, but supporting schools was a small component of the mission of the chronically understaffed and under-funded agency. Lacking the resources to hire teachers directly, the Bureau worked with Northern aid societies to supply teachers to freed people's schools. The aid societies recruited teachers from the North, and the Freedmen's Bureau assigned them to schools in the South. Because the demand for teachers exceeded the supply and many Northern teachers left after only a few terms, the Freedmen's Bureau and Northern societies sent teachers intermittently and to only a small proportion of the schools organized by Black communities in the former slave-holding states.³⁷

³³ "Schedule of Schools Under the Presbyterian Committee of Home Missions in the State of Maryland... for the Quarter ending Oct 1st, 1869," Schedules of School and Rental Accounts, Records of the Education Division of the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865-1871 (Roll #34), M803, NARA; Captain Brubaker to John Kimball, March 28, 1868 (Roll #5), John Kimball to Maj. Stuart Eldridge, March 31, 1868 (Roll #1), and Teacher's Monthly Report, April 1868 (Roll #17), in Records of the Superintendent of Education, Freedmen's Bureau, NARA; Ezra A. Johnson to Benjamin Coates, April 20, 1868, in Emma J. Werner-Lapsansky and Margaret Hope Bacon, eds., *Back to Africa: Benjamin Coates and the Colonization Movement in America, 1858-1880* (University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2005), 230-231.

³⁴ Butchart, *Schooling the Freed People*, 4-6, 20-23; Williams, *Self-Taught*, 34-38.

³⁵ Teacher's Monthly Reports, April and May 1868 (Roll #17) and July and August 1869 (Roll #20), Records of the Superintendent of Education, Freedmen's Bureau, NARA; Wallace and Reed, *Tolson's Chapel*, Section 8:7-8. Carter had only fifteen students in July, his first month teaching, and of those, thirteen were no longer learning the alphabet. Ten students joined the school in August, and at least half of those were already able to read.

³⁶ Butchart, *Schooling the Freed People*, 26-27, 29-31; Williams, *Self-Taught*, 101-106.

³⁷ Downs and Masur, *The Era of Reconstruction*, 30; Foner, *Reconstruction*, 144-148; Butchart, *Schooling the Freed People*, 31-37.

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African Americans in Sharpsburg secured teachers from the Freedmen's Bureau in the spring of 1868 and the summer of 1869. In March of 1868, they approached Captain J.C. Brubaker of the Harper's Ferry office of the Freedmen's Bureau to request a teacher. Impressed by their enthusiasm for education, Captain Brubaker assigned Ezra A. Johnson, a white teacher from Philadelphia, to the town. Johnson taught from April until the end of May and dubbed his school the American Union School.³⁸ In May 1869, nearly a year after Johnson's departure, Samuel H. Ferguson, an African American farm laborer in his early twenties who lived with David and Margaret Simons, wrote to the Freedmen's Bureau to request another teacher. The handwriting on each of the three letters that Ferguson sent to the Bureau in May and June 1869 is different, suggesting that arranging for a teacher from the Freedmen's Bureau was a cooperative effort within the local Black community, with multiple people penning letters under Ferguson's name.³⁹

In response to Ferguson's request, the Bureau assigned John J. Carter, a Black teacher from Pennsylvania and a graduate of Lincoln University in southeastern Pennsylvania, to teach in Sharpsburg under the condition that the local community supply thirty students. However, the school never attained the required thirty students, and Carter was dissatisfied with his appointment to such a small school. After one term in Sharpsburg, he left to teach in a larger school in Virginia.⁴⁰ In the fall of 1869, the Freedmen's Bureau wrote to Samuel Ferguson asking if Sharpsburg was ready for a new teacher and offered to send an African American woman to teach in the school. However, the community expressed a preference for a male teacher, delaying the process and missing the opportunity get a teacher before the Bureau ended its support for freed people's schools in 1870.⁴¹

Parents often paid tuition to teachers who came from within the local community, but given the widespread poverty among freed people after the Civil War, many of these men and women taught for little or no pay. As a result, these teachers' work in the classroom was frequently a form of in-kind contribution to the schools. For teachers sent through the Freedmen's Bureau, the typical arrangement was for the Freedmen's Bureau to pay the cost of transporting teachers to the school, a Northern benevolent society to pay the teacher's salary, and local residents to supply room and board. This pattern prevailed in Sharpsburg during John J. Carter's tenure. The Freedmen's Bureau paid to bring Carter to Sharpsburg, the Presbyterian Home Mission paid him a salary of twenty dollars per month, and members of the local African American community housed and boarded him and provided laundry services.⁴²

³⁸ Captain Brubaker to John Kimball, March 28, 1868 (Roll #5), John Kimball to Maj. Stuart Eldridge, March 31, 1868 (Roll #1), and Teacher's Monthly Report, April 1868 (Roll #17), in Records of the Superintendent of Education, Freedmen's Bureau, NARA.

³⁹ Samuel H. Ferguson to Captain Brubaker, May 8, 1869, May 18, 1869, and June 2, 1869 (Roll #6), Records of the Superintendent of Education, Freedmen's Bureau, NARA; Sharpsburg, Washington County, Maryland, 28A, in Ancestry.com, *1870 United States Federal Census*). It is possible that Ferguson himself penned none of the three letters written in May and June, since a November 2, 1869 letter from Ferguson to the Freedmen's Bureau (Roll #6, Records of the Superintendent of Education, Freedmen's Bureau, NARA) displays a fourth and less elegant handwriting style. Ferguson was not listed as a free Black in Sharpsburg in 1860 and may have been enslaved at that time.

⁴⁰ E.F. Hatfield to John Kimball, June 2, 1869 and July 31, 1869 (Roll #7), John Kimball to Samuel Ferguson, May 13, 1869 (Roll #1), Teacher's Monthly Report, July 1869 (Roll #20), and John J. Carter to John Kimball, August 13, 1869 (Roll #6), Records of the Superintendent of Education, Freedmen's Bureau, NARA; Schedules of School and Rental Accounts, Records of the Education Division of the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865-1871 (Roll #34), M803, NARA. Lincoln University was established in 1854 as the Ashmun Institute to provide collegiate education to African American men; in 1866, the school changed its name to Lincoln University in honor of assassinated President Abraham Lincoln. It supplied more teachers to freed people's schools during Reconstruction than any other university (Butchart, *Schooling the Freed People*, 26).

⁴¹ D.G. Swain to Samuel Ferguson, October 20, 1869 and December 3, 1869 (Roll #1) and Samuel Ferguson to D.G. Swain, November 2, 1869, Records of the Superintendent of Education, Freedmen's Bureau, NARA.

⁴² Williams, *Self-Taught*, 98; Butchart, *Schooling the Freed People*, 31-32; Ezra A. Johnson to John Kimball, April 6, 1868 (quotation, Roll #7), Ezra A. Johnson to Captain Brubaker, April 3, 1868 (Roll #5), and Ezra A. Johnson to Benjamin Coates, April 7, 1868 (Roll #6), Records of the Superintendent of Education, Freedmen's Bureau, NARA.

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Although the assistance provided by the Freedmen's Bureau and Northern aid societies was helpful in supporting Northern teachers, these organizations' contributions could be unpredictable and plagued with misunderstandings, as the African American community in Sharpsburg discovered during Ezra Johnson's brief tenure.⁴³ Johnson came to the Freedmen's Bureau on the recommendation of Benjamin Coates and R. R. Corson, two white men who were active in Pennsylvania organizations supporting the freed people.⁴⁴ Before Johnson left Philadelphia, Coates and Corson gave him sixty dollars that they intended as his salary for three months of teaching. Johnson, however, spent most of the money on clothing and travel before reaching Sharpsburg, mistakenly believing that local residents would pay his salary using rent money from the Freedmen's Bureau. Although the Freedmen's Bureau did sometimes pay rent on privately owned buildings used as schools in order to circumvent restrictions on its ability to pay teachers' salaries, this was not the case in Sharpsburg. Upon realizing there were no rent payments to fund his salary, Johnson repeatedly appealed to the Freedmen's Bureau, Corson, and Coates, but all refused to send additional funds. The teacher soon began charging tuition, but parents struggled to afford the payments. Within a month of Johnson's arrival, local residents complained to the Freedmen's Bureau office in Harper's Ferry, prompting a visit from Bureau officials. Although Johnson was willing to continue teaching in Sharpsburg, the Freedmen's Bureau ended its support for the school after one term, citing low enrollment, difficulties funding Johnson's salary, and "a little friction" between Johnson and the local African American community, which ended up contributing more than anticipated for Johnson's services.⁴⁵

As Northerners, Ezra A. Johnson and John J. Carter were in the minority of teachers in freed people's schools. Even among documented teachers, Southerners outnumbered Northerners. The names of countless Southern teachers, including those who taught in Sharpsburg before, between, and after the two Northern teachers, went unrecorded, so the proportion of Southern teachers is likely even higher. The majority of the Northern teachers, like Ezra Johnson, were white, and women outnumbered men in this group.⁴⁶ Many white teachers from the North, including Johnson, encountered difficulties finding lodging with whites in the communities where they taught and were socially ostracized by the white community. Before coming to Sharpsburg, Johnson attempted to open a school in Upper Marlboro, Maryland, but left because of threats from local whites and difficulties finding accommodations with a white family. Shortly after arriving in Sharpsburg, Johnson wrote, "... the [white] citizens would allow a coloured [*sic*] man to teach here, but if possible, they won't allow a white teacher to come here and teach the coloured [*sic*] people, and they have made up their minds to freeze me out with cold shoulders." Prior to Johnson's arrival, members of the Black community in Sharpsburg persuaded a local white family to board the teacher, but when Johnson arrived, the family unexpectedly rescinded their offer. In the end, local Black families provided Johnson with lodging and meals.⁴⁷

Like most Northern white teachers in freed people's schools, Johnson taught for only a few terms. He taught

⁴³ Williams, *Self-Taught*, 83-92; Butchart, *Schooling the Freed People*, 32-34.

⁴⁴ Coates and Corson were both affiliated with the Pennsylvania Branch of the American Freedmen's Union Commission (AFUC), but explicitly stated that they were supporting Johnson as individuals rather than as agents of the AFUC, which had concerns about Johnson's character and loyalty to the Union. R.R. Corson to John Kimball, April 13, 1868 (Roll #6), Records of the Superintendent of Education, Freedmen's Bureau, NARA.

⁴⁵ The story of Johnson's troubled tenure in Sharpsburg is based on correspondence among Johnson, Coates, Corson, and Kimball and Brubaker from the Freedmen's Bureau, April-May 1868 (Rolls #5-#7), Records of the Superintendent of Education, Freedmen's Bureau, NARA, and on correspondence between Johnson and Coates in Werner-Lapsansky and Bacon, *Back to Africa*, 230-231, 237-239. On the Freedmen's Bureau and rent payments, see Butchart, *Schooling the Freed People*, 31-32.

⁴⁶ Butchart, *Schooling the Freed People*, 53-57, 79-81; Williams, *Self-Taught*, 98-99.

⁴⁷ Ronald E. Butchart, *Northern Schools, Southern Blacks, and Reconstruction: Freedmen's Education, 1862-1875* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1980), 115-117; John Kimball to Maj. Stuart Eldridge, March 31, 1868 (Roll #1), Ezra A. Johnson to John Kimball, April 6, 1868 (quotation, Roll #7), Ezra A. Johnson to Captain Brubaker, April 3, 1868 (Roll #5), and Ezra A. Johnson to Benjamin Coates, April 7, 1868 (Roll #6), Records of the Superintendent of Education, Freedmen's Bureau, NARA.

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just once before coming to Sharpsburg and did not teach again after leaving the school in Tolson's Chapel. The hostility that he and other Northern white teachers encountered from local whites contributed to their leaving after only a few terms, but the nature of their motivations played a role as well. Although Johnson's correspondence gives little indication of his specific reasons for teaching Black Southerners, most white teachers from the North journeyed south out of a sense of moral obligation or religious calling. As Northern whites' enthusiasm for the cause of freed people's education waned in the late 1860s, they turned their attention to other benevolent activities and religious missions. Accordingly, the number of white teachers from the North declined after 1866.⁴⁸

As the number of white teachers decreased, the number of Black teachers increased. Growing numbers of Black teachers from the North went south to teach in freed people's schools in the late 1860s, and the number of qualified Black teachers from the South steadily rose. Black Southerners exhibited a preference for teachers of their own race, whom they believed "would be good role models for children and less likely to harbor racial prejudices." Though interested in assisting those who had endured enslavement in the South, white teachers did not necessarily believe in racial equality and frequently adopted a paternalistic and condescending attitude towards their students.⁴⁹

In contrast, African American teachers from both North and South demonstrated a strong and lasting commitment to educating the freed people that was rooted in racial solidarity and a desire to help advance African Americans towards political, social, and economic equality. Historian Ronald Butchart estimates that between 1861 and 1876, "Northern African Americans participated in the education of their race at a rate twelve to fifteen times greater than Northern whites." Not only were African Americans more likely than whites to teach in freed people's schools, they generally continued in the work for a longer period of time. The contrast between the two Northern teachers in the Sharpsburg school illustrates this broader pattern. Whereas Johnson taught only two terms, John J. Carter went from Sharpsburg to a school in Virginia where he taught until his death in 1888. Although Carter had more generous and constant support from Northern benevolent organizations while in Sharpsburg than did Johnson, Black teachers overall were less likely than white teachers to receive such support. That they nevertheless taught for longer periods of time than white teachers illustrates the depth of African American teachers' commitment to the cause of freed people's education.⁵⁰

Students and Curriculum at Tolson's Chapel, 1868-1869

The number of students who attended schools such as the one in Tolson's Chapel and the sacrifices that they and their families made to attend school testify to the value that African Americans in the South placed on education in the years following the end of the Civil War. As historian Ronald Butchart notes, "The freed people's demand for education overawed all efforts to accommodate it."⁵¹ In Sharpsburg, eighteen students attended the school in Tolson's Chapel in the spring of 1868; most were formerly enslaved. The number of students in the summer of 1869 ranged from fifteen to twenty-five; of these, between eleven and sixteen were

⁴⁸ Butchart, *Schooling the Freed People*, 20, 80-81, 85-88, 104-108, 113; R.R. Corson to John Kimball, April 13, 1868 (Roll #6), Records of the Superintendent of Education, Freedmen's Bureau, NARA.

⁴⁹ Downs and Masur, *The Era of Reconstruction*, 32 (quotation); Butchart, *Schooling the Freed People*, 80, 118-119; Williams, *Self-Taught*, 152-161.

⁵⁰ Butchart, *Schooling the Freed People*, xii (quotation), 19-20, 36-38, 43-44, 80; Williams, *Self-Taught*, 96-99; Fuke, *Imperfect Equality*, 100-103; Ancestry.com, *Virginia, Deaths and Burials Index, 1853-1917* [database on-line] (Provo, Utah: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2011).

⁵¹ Butchart, *Schooling the Freed People*, 3.

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“always present.”⁵² Although the Sharpsburg school was small, the students represented a significant proportion of the school-aged African American population in the area. In 1870, there were only about fifty-five school-aged children in the Sharpsburg election district, including roughly twenty-five who lived in the town of Sharpsburg.⁵³

Distance and poverty were among the greatest obstacles to school attendance for African Americans in the late 1860s. Children and adults traveled long distances on foot to attend school. Soon after arriving in Sharpsburg in April 1868, Johnson reported that “one of the families has sent after their grandchildren nearly a hundred miles up the [Chesapeake & Ohio] canal, to come here to attend school.”⁵⁴ Sending a child to school often required economic sacrifices, and families at times had to interrupt their children’s schooling so that the children could work to help support the family. Johnson and Carter both taught in the warmer months of the year and predicted higher attendance during the winter, when there was less work on farms and on the canal. Broader patterns in attendance among Freedmen’s Bureau schools suggest that their predictions were likely correct, as the number of students typically peaked during the winter months.⁵⁵

Many African American adults sought education not only for their children but for themselves. In response, teachers in Reconstruction-era schools often offered night classes. Johnson taught night classes during his first month in Sharpsburg, but his reports to the Freedmen’s Bureau suggest that he discontinued them after a month. It is not clear whether Carter taught night classes, but he had eight students who were over the age of sixteen. The demand for adult education in Sharpsburg remained high after Carter’s departure. Writing to the Freedmen’s Bureau in November 1869, during a season when employment opportunities were at an ebb, Samuel Ferguson stated that there were twenty-six “young men and married men” who were ready to attend school.⁵⁶

The curriculum in African American schools in the late 1860s typically included reading, writing, spelling, grammar, mathematics, and geography, but the subjects varied by teacher. Information about the curriculum in the school in Tolson’s Chapel exists only for the two terms when Northern teachers provided instruction. Both Johnson and Carter focused on reading and writing. Whereas all students had lessons in reading and writing, only about one-quarter of the students were learning arithmetic. Johnson provided instruction in geography to one student.⁵⁷ Although some organizations published textbooks designed specifically for use in freed people’s schools, most teachers in the 1860s used standard textbooks. In 1868, Johnson brought some schoolbooks to the Sharpsburg school from the American Freedmen’s Union Commission, which favored using standard textbooks

⁵² Teacher’s Monthly School Reports, April and May 1868 (Roll #17) and July and August 1869 (Roll #20), Records of the Superintendent of Education, Freedmen’s Bureau, M1056, NARA.

⁵³ Sharpsburg District, Washington County, Maryland, in Ancestry.com, *1870 United States Federal Census*. The number of school-aged children includes children ages five through eighteen who were described in the census as Black or mulatto.

⁵⁴ Ezra A. Johnson to Benjamin Coates, April 20, 1868, in Lapsansky-Werner and Bacon, *Back to Africa*, 230 (quotation); Williams, *Self-Taught*, 147-149.

⁵⁵ Ezra A. Johnson to Benjamin Coates, April 7, 1868 (Roll #6), Ezra A. Johnson to John Kimball, May 11, 1868 and 30 May 1868 (Roll #7), John J. Carter to John Kimball, August 13, 1869 (Roll #6), Records of the Superintendent of Education, Freedmen’s Bureau, NARA; Ezra A. Johnson to Benjamin Coates, April 20, 1868, in Lapsansky-Werner and Bacon, *Back to Africa*, 230; Williams, *Self-Taught*, 141-147, 149; William Frank Troost, “Accomplishment and Abandonment: A History of the Freedmen’s Bureau Schools” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Irvine, 2007), 33; Fuke, *Imperfect Equality*, 101-102.

⁵⁶ In his April 1868 report, Johnson stated that he taught day and night school, but the following month, he reported only operating a day school. Teacher’s Monthly Report, August 1869 (Roll #20) and Ferguson to Swain, Nov. 2, 1869 (Roll #6), Records of the Superintendent of Education, Freedmen’s Bureau, NARA; Williams, *Self-Taught*, 167-171.

⁵⁷ Teacher’s Monthly Reports, April and May 1868 (Roll #17) and July and August 1869 (Roll #20) and Ferguson to Swain, Nov. 2, 1869 (Roll #6), Records of the Superintendent of Education, Freedmen’s Bureau, NARA; Wallace and Reed, *Tolson’s Chapel*, Section 8:12; Butchart, *Schooling the Freed People*, 127-132.

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in schools for freed people.⁵⁸

Black students' enthusiasm for education and their aptitude for learning challenged white teachers' preconceived notions that their students were intellectually inferior as a result of their race or the effects of slavery. Both of the Northern teachers at the Sharpsburg school were generally pleased with their students' progress. Soon after opening the school, Ezra Johnson reported that he had "a very quiet, orderly, and interesting set of scholars." Towards the end of the term, he boasted about a six-year-old boy who had started out knowing only three letters but was reading and spelling three-letter words after just one month in school. The more taciturn John J. Carter simply remarked, "They learn very fast." When Johnson began teaching, eight students were learning the alphabet, but within a month, only three were still studying the alphabet.⁵⁹ At least one student who attended school in Tolson's Chapel in the late 1860s, James F. Simons, went on to become a teacher himself, returning to Tolson's Chapel during the 1878-1879 school year as a teacher in what had become Sharpsburg's racially segregated public school.⁶⁰

Freed People's Schools and Public Education in the South, 1870-1899

In the early and mid-1870s, outside support for freed people's schools dwindled and Black Southerners continued to work at the state and local levels to expand the public-school systems. Congress ended the Freedmen's Bureau's educational initiatives in 1870, and Northern benevolent societies largely withdrew support for freed people's schools around the same time.⁶¹ African Americans, meanwhile, continued to operate their own schools. After John J. Carter's departure from Sharpsburg in 1869, local residents and church members likely furthered their education through informal or formal instruction from more educated members of the community or in Tolson's Chapel's Sabbath school, which boasted fifty-five students in 1871.⁶² Particularly in urban areas, African Americans continued to establish and advocate for public schools, and the number of public schools for both Black and white children steadily increased in the 1870s.⁶³

⁵⁸ Williams, *Self-Taught*, 134; Ezra A. Johnson to Benjamin Coates, April 20, 1868, in Werner-Lapsansky and Bacon, *Back to Africa*, 230-231. Johnson asked students' families to pay for the books, but it is not clear from the correspondence whether Johnson left the books in Sharpsburg or returned them to the AFUC.

⁵⁹ Ezra A. Johnson to Benjamin Coates, April 7, 1868 (quotation) (Roll #6), Teacher's Monthly Reports, April and May 1868 (Roll #17), Teacher's Monthly Report, August 1869 (quotation) (Roll #20), Records of the Superintendent of Education, Freedmen's Bureau, NARA; Ezra A. Johnson to Benjamin Coates, May 23, 1868, in Lapsansky-Werner and Bacon, *Back to Africa*, 237-238; Butchart, *Schooling the Freed People*, 128-130; Williams, *Self-Taught*, 152-155.

⁶⁰ Wallace and Reed, *Tolson's Chapel*, Section 8:11; *Report of the State Board of Education, Shewing the Condition of the Public Schools of Maryland for the Year Ending September 30, 1879* (Annapolis, Md.: W. T. Iglehart & Co., 1880; electronic edition at https://archive.org/details/report00mary_13), 268-269. The annual report on public schools in Maryland indicates that Simons taught during the 1878-1879 school year, but school commission records indicate that he was not confirmed as teacher until 1879. Simons is one of three school-aged African Americans in the town of Sharpsburg who are listed in the 1870 population census as having attended school within the previous year. He was likely the lone advanced reader reported by Ezra Johnson in 1868. Sharpsburg District, Washington County, Maryland, in Ancestry.com, *1870 United States Federal Census*; Teacher's Monthly Reports, April 1868 (Roll #17), Records of the Superintendent of Education, Freedmen's Bureau, NARA.

⁶¹ Foner, *Reconstruction*, 448-454; Jack Salzman, David Lionel Smith, and Cornel West, eds., *Encyclopedia of African-American History and Culture*, 2nd ed., Volume 1 (New York: Macmillan Library Reference 1996), 358; Anderson, *Education of Blacks*, 30; Butchart, *Schooling the Freed People*, 80. The Freedmen's Bureau was abolished in 1872.

⁶² Methodist church records show that the churches throughout the Washington Conference, including Tolson's Chapel, provided Sunday schools in the late 1860s. *Minutes of the Annual Conferences of the Methodist Episcopal Church for the Year 1869* (New York: Carlton & Lanahan, n.d.; electronic edition at <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/nyp.33433069134876>), 84-87 and *Minutes of the Annual Conferences of the Methodist Episcopal Church for the Year 1871* (New York: Carlton & Lanahan, n.d.; electronic edition at <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/nyp.33433069134868>), 28; Anderson, *Education of Blacks*, 12-15. The links for the electronic editions contain the minutes for the year cited as well as for the preceding year.

⁶³ Hilary Green, *Educational Reconstruction: African American Schools in the Urban South, 1865-1890* (New York: Fordham

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In the late 1870s, white Southern Democrats re-took control of state governments in the former Confederacy by manipulating election laws, threatening Black voters, and rallying under the banner of white supremacy. African Americans' persistent demands for education, combined with a largely illiterate poor white population, challenged Democrats' vision of white supremacy by raising the specter of Black Southerners being more educated than white Southerners. In response, Democrats left the racially segregated public-school system in place but cut spending on schools for African Americans. Part of a broader effort to institutionalize white supremacy, this strategy attempted to contain the threat of Black education by ensuring that white schools were superior in facilities, supplies, teacher salaries, and curriculum.⁶⁴

Maryland took a different path towards racially segregated and unequal public schools than did the states of the former Confederacy, but the state's public-school system was similarly rooted in Black Marylanders' commitment to education and white Marylanders' determination to maintain racial inequality. When Black men in Maryland gained the right to vote in February 1870, the stark contrast between increasingly prevalent public schools for white children and a dearth of public schools for Black children took on political significance. During the 1871 elections, white Republicans in Maryland championed public schools for Black children in order to attract Black voters.⁶⁵ When the Maryland legislature convened in 1872 with a mix of Republicans and Democrats, it increased funding for African American schools and passed a law requiring that counties provide one school for Black children in each election district.⁶⁶

The effects of the 1872 education law quickly became evident in Sharpsburg. The Washington County school commissioners had appointed three Black men (T. H. Sliner, George Hopewell, and Nathan Keller) as trustees for an African American school in the Sharpsburg district in the spring of 1871, but the school did not open until the fall of 1872, several months after passage of the state law requiring that each district operate at least public school for African Americans.⁶⁷ Although the 1872 state education law led to an increase in the number of African American schools in Maryland, the schools remained under-funded compared to white schools. The fact that the Sharpsburg Colored School was located in Tolson's Chapel rather than a county-built schoolhouse illustrates the broader pattern of inequality.⁶⁸ In 1878, eighty-nine percent of the 127 white schools in Washington County were in county-owned schoolhouses, yet only four of the county's thirteen schools for Black children (thirty-one percent) were located in buildings owned by the county. Not until 1899 did the public school for African Americans in Sharpsburg move out of Tolson's Chapel and into a publicly funded, purpose-built schoolhouse located approximately one block east of the church.⁶⁹

University Press, 2016), 6-7; Foner, *Reconstruction*, 366. Green notes that public schools in the South in the period between their initial establishment in the late 1860s and the funding cuts of the late 1870s and early 1880s has received little scholarly attention.

⁶⁴ Downs and Masur, *Era of Reconstruction*, 83, 85; Anderson, *Education of Blacks*, 19-28, 31-32; Williams, *Self-Taught*, 178-200.

⁶⁵ Margaret Law Callcott, *The Negro in Maryland Politics, 1870-1912* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1969), 64.

⁶⁶ *Annual Report of the State Board of Education, Shewing the Condition of the Public Schools of Maryland... for Year Ending Sept. 30, 1873* (Annapolis, Md.: S.S. Mills & L.F. Colton, 1874; electronic edition at hathitrust.org, <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.39015068319055>), 11, 13. Under the new law, state education funds for African American schools were distributed to localities based on the number of Black students rather than the race of taxpayers.

⁶⁷ Wallace and Reed, *Tolson's Chapel*, Section 8:11; *Report of the State Board of Education Shewing the Condition of the Public Schools of Maryland... for the Year Ending Sept. 30, 1872* (Annapolis, Md.: L.F. Colton & Co., Steam Printers, 1873; electronic edition at hathitrust.org, <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.39015068319071>), 227-228; *Annual Report... for Year Ending Sept. 30, 1873*, 272, 277.

⁶⁸ Downs and Masur, *Era of Reconstruction*, 85; Susan Cianci Salvatore, et al, *Civil Rights in America: Racial Desegregation of Public Education in the United States: A National Historic Landmark Theme Study* (Washington, D.C.: National Historic Landmarks Program, National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, 2000), 28

⁶⁹ *Report of the State Board of Education...for the Year Ending September 30, 1879*, 258-269; Wallace and Reed, *Tolson's Chapel*, Section 8:12.

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Between 1872 and 1899, the years that the Sharpsburg Colored School was located in Tolson's Chapel, average attendance ranged from ten to twenty students, with between twenty and thirty-five different pupils attending the school in any given year.⁷⁰ The clergy and members of Tolson's Chapel were active in the operation of the public school in the church. Minister Jacob Gross taught the school in 1873-1874, and was appointed a school trustee in 1874, along with church member Hilary Watson, who lived nearby on East High Street. David Simons, one of the church's trustees, took over teaching duties in 1874, and his son James, who was also a church member, began teaching in 1878. James Simons remained in the post for most of the remaining years that the school was located in Tolson's Chapel.⁷¹ Hilary Watson, David Simons, and James Simons are all buried in the Tolson's Chapel cemetery.

The schools that African Americans created and sustained during Reconstruction had a lasting impact on Southern education and on Black communities. As voters and legislators, African Americans established a precedent for state involvement in public education. As parents, students, and community members who steadfastly pursued education in the face of numerous obstacles, they claimed education as one of their rights as citizens, challenged whites' claims of racial superiority, and motivated whites to support public schools if only to avoid falling behind Blacks. Thanks largely to Black Southerners' own initiative and dedication to learning, the illiteracy rate among African Americans in the region declined from ninety-five percent in 1860 to thirty percent in 1910. Schools such as the one in Tolson's Chapel nurtured the beginnings of an educated Black professional class, and African Americans' demand for qualified teachers spurred the establishment of Black universities, colleges, and normal schools.⁷²

Comparable Properties

Tolson's Chapel and School stands out among other resources associated with African American institution-building during Reconstruction because of its extraordinary physical integrity and its ability to convey significant patterns in the development of African American community life during its earliest post-Emancipation phase. Tolson's Chapel uniquely embodies the importance and interconnectedness of three kinds of institutions: the church, the cemetery, and the school. Because of its well-documented history, its clear physical reflection of its uses, and its physical and historical setting within a larger national story of emancipation, freedom, and the question of citizenship, Tolson's Chapel exceptionally reflects and commemorates the development of community institutions for freed men and women during a critical phase in America's history.

In the National Historic Landmarks theme study, *The Era of Reconstruction, 1861-1900*, the list of existing National Historic Landmarks (NHLs) related to Reconstruction includes no examples of churches, grade schools, or cemeteries that were built by African Americans and are located outside of urban areas or historic districts.⁷³ Among the comparable properties within NHL historic districts, only the Penn

⁷⁰ This information was gathered from the annual reports of the Maryland State Board of Education for the years 1872 to 1900. Electronic editions of these reports are available at hathitrust.org and archive.org. The school was definitely located in Tolson's Chapel in the fall of 1873, since Jacob M. Gross, the church's minister, served as the teacher that year. In 1872-1873, when Mary P. Williams was the teacher, the location of the school is not provided in official documents.

⁷¹ Wallace and Reed, *Tolson's Chapel*, Section 8:7-8, 10. Little is known about George W. Smith, who taught the school from 1876 until 1878. All of the Maryland State Board of Education Annual Reports use an alternative spelling – Samons – for David and James Simons. See note 59 for discussion of the evidence for the date that Simons began teaching in Sharpsburg.

⁷² Williams, *Self-Taught*, 69-72, 174-178, 196-197; Anderson, *Education of Blacks*, 26-27, 31, 238-245.

⁷³ Some of the National Historic Landmarks that are associated with historically Black colleges and universities (such as Swayne Hall

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School (Penn School Historic District, NHL, 1974) and the Second Street School (Waterford Historic District, NHL, 1970) are directly and primarily related to African American educational and religious institutions during this period. However, the two school buildings that survive at Penn School are associated with its operation during the Civil War, and the schoolhouse that was constructed in 1865 is no longer extant. The Second Street School is comparable to Tolson's Chapel because it reflects the same institution-building trends and housed an African American school as well as a church.⁷⁴

The search for other comparable properties that functioned as churches, schools, and cemeteries began by focusing on schools because these were the least numerous of the three types of resources. In 2017 and 2018, Elizabeth Totten, Molly Ricks, and Ayla Mangold interns working with the National Historic Landmarks Program of the National Capital Region, National Park Service, conducted a preliminary survey of surviving African American schools erected between 1865 and 1875. Focusing on the states that permitted slavery at the start of the Civil War in 1861, they searched National Register of Historic Places listings, contacted State Historic Preservation Offices, consulted state-level African American heritage organizations and publications, examined historic contexts and surveys of African American historic resources, conducted internet searches, and reviewed academic studies of Freedmen's Bureau schools in individual states.

This survey confirmed Tolson's Chapel's rarity among surviving African American schools from this period in terms of its level of historic documentation, its historical associations, and its physical integrity. Many schools have been destroyed, moved, or significantly altered since 1875. While Tolson's Chapel's dual use is well-documented, some potentially comparable properties lacked clear documentation of their use as both a church and a school. While cemeteries are common at rural African American churches from this period, few surviving churches that were used as schools also have cemeteries associated with them. The survey indicated that most of the surviving Reconstruction-era schools are in the border states or the Upper South. More research is needed to determine why so few schools survive in rural areas of the Deep South, but possible reasons include higher incidences of racially motivated attacks on Black institutions in the former Confederacy during Reconstruction (and later) and less sturdy construction methods utilized in warmer climates. Moreover, since a higher proportion of African Americans in the Deep South were enslaved than was the case in the border states, they had fewer resources to invest in school construction soon after Emancipation. Lightly framed or makeshift buildings constructed immediately after the war were then more likely to be replaced later in the nineteenth century as Black congregations and communities acquired the resources to do so.

From the list of surviving schools, the researchers identified four properties other than Tolson's that functioned as churches and schools during this period, were built by African Americans, and retain a good amount of integrity. These are Bowen's Chapel and School in Carroll County, Maryland (Maryland Historical Trust Inventory, CARR-1092); Stanley Institute in Cambridge, Maryland (NRHP, 1975, NRIS 75000888); Second Street School in Waterford, Virginia (contributing building in Waterford Historic District, NHL, 1970, NRIS 69000256); and Howland Chapel School in Heathsville, Virginia (NRHP, 1991, NRIS 90002206). The existing documentation for these four properties indicates that they have similar associations with African American religious and educational institutions. As was the case with Tolson's Chapel, the local African American community played a significant role in constructing the buildings and establishing schools at all four

at Talladega College and Jubilee Hall at Fisk University) provided elementary education in the early years of Reconstruction. Although these NHLs illustrate African Americans' commitment to education in the years after the end of slavery, they are primarily associated with the development of institutions of higher education.

⁷⁴ Founded with the assistance of White Quakers, the Second Street School was used as a church by a local African Methodist Episcopal Church congregation until 1891.

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properties. In addition, all received support from the Freedmen's Bureau and from Northern benefactors or organizations. However, none of the comparable properties equal Tolson's Chapel in the strength of their associations with trends important in African American church, school, and cemetery building during Reconstruction, nor do they clearly display their dual use in their extant features.

All four comparable properties are associated with African American churches that formed soon after the end of the Civil War. However, existing documentation suggests that that the connection between the local congregation and Howland Chapel School is not as strong as with the others. Notably, Massachusetts abolitionist, philanthropist, and teacher Emily Howland privately owned and managed the school until 1921, and it is not clear how involved the church was in the organization or management of the school prior to and after constructing its own sanctuary in 1892.⁷⁵ Howland School better represents the involvement of Northern benefactors who endeavored to create educational opportunities for African Americans in Southern states during Reconstruction than it does the homegrown efforts of the local African American community as is the case at Tolson's Chapel and School. Only the Stanley Institute has an associated cemetery. The Stanley Institute served as a church only until 1875 when the Christ Rock Methodist Episcopal Church and Cemetery was built across the street. The cemetery is not on the same property and was only established after the independent church building was operating.

Tolson's Chapel is most notable for preserving physical evidence of its historic use as both a church and school. None of the other examples physically illustrate both functions with authentic period elements. The original pulpit and pews at Tolson's Chapel reflect its history as a church, while the liquid slate on the walls illustrates its overlapping function as a school through 1899.

Bowen's Chapel and School ceased to be a school in 1892 after the construction of a new schoolhouse on the same property. After this, the sanctuary was remodeled, removing all vestiges of the educational function, thus affecting its integrity to the period when it was a school. While the historic educational use is readily apparent in the interior arrangement and fixtures in the other three buildings, there are no historic interior elements that also convey each building's historic use as a church.

While all four retain integrity, only the Second Street School in Waterford appears to retain its 1860s form and primary interior finishes. The exterior German siding and large, five-panel slate blackboard are unusual elements that, if original, suggest that the Second Street School represents an particularly well-appointed African American schoolhouse of the era. Tolson's Chapel is likely a more typical example representative of the hundreds of modest schools/churches erected across the Southern and border states just after the Civil War. The use of liquid slate in place of slate blackboards reflects the limited means available to most Black communities at the time.

Tolson's Chapel and School combines clear associations with important historical trends with a physical presence well-suited to illustrating those associations. Thus, it meets National Historic Landmark criteria and stands as a testament to the determination of African Americans in the former slave-holding states to build independent institutions and assert their citizenship after the end of slavery.

⁷⁵ Jeffrey M. O'Dell and Carolyn Jett, "Howland Chapel School" National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form, 1989 (NRHP Listed 01/25/1991), and Virginia Department of Historic Resources VCRIS entry 066-5059 "First Baptist Church" Northumberland County, Virginia. Volunteer Survey conducted January 2010.

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6. PROPERTY DESCRIPTION AND STATEMENT OF INTEGRITY

Ownership of Property

Private: X
Public-Local:
Public-State:
Public-Federal:

Category of Property

Building(s): X
District:
Site:
Structure:
Object:

Number of Resources within Boundary of Property:

Contributing

Buildings: 1
Sites: 1
Structures:
Objects:
Total: 2

Noncontributing

Buildings:
Sites:
Structures:
Objects:
Total: 0

PROVIDE PRESENT AND PAST PHYSICAL DESCRIPTIONS OF PROPERTY

(Please see specific guidance for type of resource[s] being nominated)

Summary Description

Built in 1866 as a church, Tolson's Chapel and School stands on the north side of East High Street in Sharpsburg, a small town in western Maryland near the site of the Civil War Battle of Antietam (September 17, 1862). There is written documentation that the church also functioned as a school for African American children in 1868 and 1869, and again from the early 1870s to 1899; it likely functioned as a school at other times in the 1860s and early 1870s as well. The building stands close to the street, at the southern edge of a deep, narrow, 0.23-acre property within a historically African American residential block at the southern edge of town. Behind the church is a small cemetery that was in use by the late 1880s.

The church is a one-story, log and braced-frame building with board-and-batten siding. Its front-gabled roof is covered with wood shingles, and a belfry sits atop the roof peak near the front of the building. The entrance is a single, centered door in the south elevation. There are two windows on each side elevation and no windows on the rear elevation, where there is a small, shed-roofed, frame addition that was likely constructed in the late 1860s or 1870s. The undivided interior features built-in pews arranged on either side of a center aisle. The pews face north towards a raised chancel that incorporates a built-in pulpit on a dais, and an arched opening behind the pulpit provides access to an alcove that occupies the rear addition. A balcony with additional seating extends across the southern wall of the nave. The church has wood floors, and the ceiling and walls are plastered; beadboard wainscoting was added to the walls in the 1920s. Liquid slate blackboards associated with the building's use as a school are present on portions of the walls near the chancel.

Tolson's Chapel and School possesses all seven aspects of integrity and retains the character and feeling of a church, school, and cemetery from the Reconstruction era. The changes that have been made to the building and site are minor and do not detract from their ability to convey their historic use and significance.

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Location and Setting

Tolson's Chapel and School is located in Sharpsburg, Maryland, a town of approximately seven hundred residents. Founded in 1763, Sharpsburg lies in the Ridge and Valley geographic region between the Blue Ridge Mountains and the Appalachian Plateau. The Potomac River, which forms the boundary between Maryland and West Virginia, is less than two miles west of Sharpsburg. Adjacent to the town's eastern boundary is Antietam National Battlefield, and the surrounding area is primarily rural.

Since its construction in 1866, Tolson's Chapel has remained in its current location on East High Street, roughly in the middle of the block between South Mechanic Street and South Church Street, in a historically African American enclave. Immediately to the west is a grassy, vacant lot with scattered trees (Photo 2); this lot was also vacant during the period of significance.⁷⁶ The properties immediately to the east of the church contain a circa 1900 dwelling that faces East High Street and an auto repair shop that faces the alley. All but one of the buildings on the north side of the street are associated with the nineteenth-century African American community in Sharpsburg, including a mid-nineteenth-century dwelling at 117 East High Street and an 1899 school (119 East High Street) that has been converted into a residence. The houses on the south side of the street are outside the town boundary and were built after 1945.⁷⁷

Site

The Tolson's Chapel congregation acquired the 0.23-acre property in two parcels in 1867 and 1883, respectively, and the property size has not changed since 1883. Composed of two lots, the property is narrow and deep, extending approximately 53 feet along East High Street and 206 feet to a paved alley that forms the northern boundary. A gravel and dirt alley runs along the western edge of the property (Photos 2 and 4). The land slopes down to the north and west, and there are steep, grassy embankments along both alleys. A grassy embankment that is more gradually sloped runs along East High Street (Photos 1 and 2). The eastern boundary is demarcated by a stepped concrete block wall at the southern end and by a wood privacy fence at the northern end (Photos 4 and 6). One tree stands at the eastern edge of the grassy property, and trees line the opposite side of the west alley (Photo 6).

Situated at the southwest corner of the property, the church/school building is set back approximately fifteen feet from East High Street and five feet from the west alley. Concrete steps at the southern end of the retaining wall lead up to a grass and gravel pathway that replaced an earlier concrete sidewalk in front of the building. Between the gravel pathway and the street are two tree stumps and a metal sign. Installed in 2014, the sign is approximately four feet tall and displays the name of the church and the dates it operated (1866-1998). An interpretive wayside is located east of the chapel and roughly in line with its south wall. (See Photos 1 and 2.)

Several site features were removed after 1995, including two trees that stood in front of the building, a 1950s chain link fence along the southern edge of the cemetery, and a concrete sidewalk in front of the church. The frame, double privy that stood behind the church until the mid-1980s likely was not present during the period of significance, but there is not enough information available to determine its date of construction.

⁷⁶ Lake, Griffing, & Stevenson, *An Illustrated Atlas of Washington County, Maryland* (Philadelphia, 1877), 32.

⁷⁷ Edie Wallace, Paige Phifer, and Paula S. Reed, *Sharpsburg Historic District* (National Register of Historic Places Nomination, 2008), Section 7:58-59. The fourth dwelling on the north side of East High Street was built in 1983.

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Cemetery (1 Contributing Site)

The congregation purchased the land behind the church as a cemetery in 1883, and the last burial took place in 1996. The congregation may have been using the land as a cemetery prior to 1883, but the oldest grave marker is likely that of Mehalay Thomas. Although her marker does not provide a date of death, documentary sources suggest that she died in 1888.⁷⁸ Most of the markers commemorate burials before 1960. Although there have been no burials since 1996, two markers were added in 2015-2017: one for Virginia Cook, who died in 1996 but whose grave was unmarked, and one for World War I veteran and church member John Ellsworth Monroe.

The cemetery contains roughly eighty to eighty-five burials and approximately fifty grave markers that are generally arranged in five north-south rows. The number and spacing of burials and markers vary by row, and most of the markers face west. The Jackson family plot near the northeast corner of the building is defined by corner blocks, but in most cases, family plots are not enclosed or marked. For example, in the northern quarter of the cemetery are groups of gravestones for the Simons family and the associated King and Beeler families. Some of the family groupings consist of individual headstones, while others have a family headstone with associated lawn-style markers. Although lawn-style markers are common, the majority of the grave markers in the cemetery are die-and-base headstones. Other marker types include military headstones, a tablet headstone, a pedestal, a pulpit, and a plaque. Most do not have any iconography, but among those that do, religious symbols such as crosses, heavenly gates, and crowns are present. Approximately one-quarter of the markers have associated foot stones.⁷⁹ (See Photos 3, 5, and 6.)

Church/School (1 Contributing Building)*Exterior (Photos 1-4)*

Tolson's Chapel and School comprises a front-gable main block and a one-bay, shed-roofed addition that is centered on its north (rear) elevation. The main block measures approximately 21½ feet by 28 feet and rests on a limestone foundation with irregular coursing. Embedded in the foundation at the southwest corner is a sandstone cornerstone. Most of the inscription has worn away, but enough letters remain to suggest that it read: "[TO]LSON'S CH[A]PEL." A date was inscribed below the letters, but it is no longer decipherable. The structural system of the main block combines log and braced-frame construction. While not common, this method of construction has been documented in other Washington County buildings dating to the third quarter of the nineteenth century.⁸⁰ Hewn logs were mortised into the corner posts and placed around tall down braces at each corner. A summer beam running north-south supports the center of the building.

Wood, board-and-batten siding covers the exterior walls of the main block, and a wide, flat frieze with drip cap extends along the roof line. The gable ends are clad in wood drop siding and a flat fascia board. The moderately sloped, front-gable roof has wood shingles and boxed eaves; metal gutters are attached to the eaves on the side

⁷⁸ Edie Wallace and Paula S. Reed, *Tolson's Chapel*, National Register of Historic Places Nomination (2008), Section 8:13.

⁷⁹ In 2013, the Friends of Tolson's Chapel contracted with the Chicora Foundation to conduct a survey of the cemetery using ground-penetrating radar (GPR). The survey revealed 82 burials, but the investigators noted that there may be additional burials not detected by GPR. Michael Trinkley and Debi Hacker, *Preservation Assessment of Tolson's Chapel Cemetery, Sharpsburg, Maryland*, Chicora Research Contribution 552 (Chicora Foundation, Inc., Columbia, S.C., May 1, 2013).

⁸⁰ Wallace and Reed, *Tolson's Chapel*, Section 7:1.

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elevations. A chimney that was located in the center of the roof was removed and covered before 1988, but evidence of the opening remains visible in the attic.

The belfry that sits atop the roof near the front elevation is composed of three parts: a frame base clad in wood drop siding; an open area framed by four chamfered wood corner posts; and a pyramidal roof with exposed rafters and wood shingles. (See Photos 1 and 2.) Installed in 2012, the belfry was designed based on physical and photographic evidence of an earlier belfry that was removed from the roof of Tolson's Chapel circa 1980.

A concrete stoop leads to a door opening that is centered in the south (front) elevation (Photos 1 and 2). The opening holds a single, four-panel, wood door and a transom that is filled with horizontal wood boards; a piece of molded wood trim separates the door and transom. Centered in the gable above the door is a six-over-three, wood window, and each of the side elevations has two six-over-six, wood windows with three-paneled, wood shutters. Narrow wood casing with a quirk bead is present on all of the door and window openings. The door and the side windows have drip caps, and the windowsills consist of flat, square-edged boards.

The rear addition (Photos 3 and 4), which houses the chancel alcove, was likely constructed in the late 1860s or 1870s and was certainly in place by 1922, when it was depicted on a Sanborn Fire Insurance map of Sharpsburg.⁸¹ This centered, frame addition covers approximately one-third of the rear elevation and sits atop a concrete foundation. Clad in wood drop siding, the addition extends from the frieze band down to grade level, which is about three feet below the sill of the main block. The addition's corrugated metal shed roof has a raking cornice and boxed eaves. On its east elevation is a small, board-and-batten door that sits approximately level with the sill of the main block and opens outward on two hinges at the bottom of the opening. A larger board-and-batten door on the addition's west elevation provides access to an unfinished storage area at grade. The original exterior siding of the main block, including the battens, is visible from inside the storage area.

The church's present appearance and structural stability reflect a careful restoration overseen by the Friends of Tolson's Chapel between 2003 and 2010 and partially funded by grants from the Maryland Historical Trust and Preservation Maryland. Structural members, mortise-and-tenon joints, daubing, and the historic board-and-batten siding were retained wherever possible, but some elements of the building's structural system and exterior deteriorated in the late twentieth century when the church was infrequently used or vacant. The summer beam, two corner posts, and approximately twenty percent of the original logs were so severely deteriorated that they needed to be replaced. Replacement logs are marked with the date of installation (2008) in order to differentiate them from historic materials. When the mid-twentieth-century asphalt siding was removed, the boards remained but the battens were missing. All of the battens, as well as severely deteriorated boards, were replaced in kind to match the original siding. Similarly, new wood shingles were installed to match deteriorated, historic shingles that remained under the corrugated metal roof that was removed during the renovation. The brick chimney is scheduled to be reconstructed in the fall of 2018.

Interior (Photos 7-10)

Composed of an undivided nave, a chancel, and a balcony, the floor plan of Tolson's Chapel is typical of small, mid-nineteenth-century, rural churches. In the nave, pews flank a central aisle and face north towards the raised chancel, which incorporates a centered alcove that occupies the rear addition. Stairs in the southwest corner lead

⁸¹ The use of cut nails in the structure of the addition suggests a pre-1900 construction date. The concrete foundation may have replaced an earlier frame support system.

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to a balcony that extends along the south wall. Throughout the interior, the flooring is constructed of tongue-and-groove pine boards, many of which are original boards attached with cut nails. The boards are generally standard widths but those along the west wall are wider than those along the east wall. In the twentieth century, the Tolson's Chapel congregation replaced the floorboards in the center aisle and in front of the chancel, and placed carpet runners over these areas. In 2010, the carpet runners were removed and placed in storage.

The door at the south end of the building has flat, wood trim, while the windows have narrow, wood trim with a quirk bead; the windowsills are flat and square-edged. The arched opening for the chancel alcove is surrounded by flat, wood trim with raised fillets at the base of the arch and a projecting keystone at the top (Photos 7 and 8).

The walls are lath-and-plaster with wood, beadboard wainscoting and a molded chair rail that were installed circa 1925; there is no wainscoting in the chancel alcove. Liquid slate is present on the east and west walls between the northernmost window and the north wall (Photos 7 and 8). An economical method of installing a blackboard, liquid slate was composed of a mixture of shellac, alcohol, lampblack, and a small amount of emery applied to a plaster wall.⁸² The liquid slate that extends approximately four feet above the wainscoting in Tolson's Chapel was exposed and restored in 2017; additional liquid slate remains behind the wainscoting. Paint analysis conducted in 2006 indicated that there are two layers of liquid slate, the earliest of which likely dates to the late 1860s.⁸³

The hipped, lath-and-plaster ceiling in the nave is unadorned. Two electric light fixtures with saucer-style, enameled tin reflectors hang from the ceiling. The church had electric lights by 1922, and the fixtures may have been in place at that time.⁸⁴ A non-functional stove pipe angles towards the roof peak near the center of the nave, connecting with a historic chimney opening that has been covered on the exterior. (See Photos 7 and 8.)

In the nave, there are seven rows of flat-backed, wood pews along each side of the center aisle (Photos 8-10). The pews feature curved ends and are constructed using cut nails, indicating that they likely date to the period of significance. The southernmost pew on the west side abuts the stairs to the balcony, while the southernmost pew on the east side stands against the south wall of the building. Two of the pews near the rear of the nave are built around the posts that support the balcony. On both sides of the center aisle, the two front pews are smaller in order to allow for access to the chancel. One pew near the center of the east wall was removed to accommodate a Heatrola stove that was installed in the 1950s, and a pew that faced west towards the chancel was removed in 2010 and placed in storage; ghost marks on the walls indicate the pews' former locations.

The chancel comprises a raised platform, a centered dais with pulpit, and an alcove behind the pulpit (Photos 7 and 8). The chancel platform stretches across the north wall of the sanctuary from the west wall to the eastern edge of the alcove. The step up to the platform is faced with single-bead, vertical beadboard. During the period of significance, the raised platform was centered on the north wall and had two rounded corners. The platform was extended to the west wall in the early twentieth century, but the historic configuration remains evident in patterns in the floor boards.⁸⁵ A turned-baluster chancel rail follows the curve of the platform's southeast corner and continues in front of the chancel; a remnant of the curved railing for the southwest corner was found in storage in the building. There is a gap between the chancel railing and the solid beadboard railing in front of the choir. The choir contains a single, south-facing pew and a piano.

⁸² Wallace and Reed, *Tolson's Chapel*, Section 7:3, citing a published recipe for "Liquid Slating" from the May 1870 issue of *The Manufacturer and Builder*.

⁸³ Matthew J. Mosca, "Historic Paint Finishes Report: Samples from the Exterior and Interior of the Tolson's Chapel, Sharpsburg, Maryland" (prepared for Catocin Center for Regional Studies, June 5, 2006), 6.

⁸⁴ The 1922 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of Sharpsburg indicates that the building had electric lights at that time.

⁸⁵ The floorboards and nails suggest the choir was added in the early twentieth century.

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The pulpit stands on a dais that extends across the front of the alcove and projects approximately three feet from the alcove opening (Photos 7 and 8). Both the dais and the alcove are floored with tongue-and-groove wood floorboards that are secured with cut nails. The dais is faced with horizontal boards set behind rectangular openings, a method of creating wood panels that was also used on the balcony railing. Although the pulpit is slightly off-center because the steps leading up to it are located at the eastern edge of the dais, it is nevertheless the focal point of the chancel. Flanked by two stands, the pulpit is nailed to the raised center portion of a platform that projects a few inches beyond the front of the dais. The wood, pedestal-style pulpit has a paneled base that is open at the back, revealing the use of cut nails in its construction. A square, flat-sided pedestal set atop the base supports an angled desk that is covered with velvet affixed with upholstery nails. The stands on either side of the pulpit are roughly the same height as the pulpit and have similar bases. Atop the base of each stand is a narrow, square pedestal with a flat top. The paneling on the two stands differs slightly from the paneling on the pulpit, suggesting that they may have been added later.

In the southwest corner of the building is a half-turn stair that leads to the balcony (Photo 10). The building's structural system is visible on the unfinished interior of the under-stairs closet, which has a door constructed of vertical boards secured by two horizontal battens; the door is situated above the back of the pew. The open-string stairs have no railing on the main level.

The balcony occupies the space between the windows and the south wall and is supported by two tapered, square posts (Photos 9 and 10). A metal bracket for an oil lamp is attached to one of the posts; a similar bracket once hung on the other post. The railing along the edge of the balcony consists of horizontal boards set behind a series of five rectangular openings, similar to the facing on the chancel dais. Two wood, straight-back pews with rectilinear pew ends are located on the balcony, and a bench is attached to the south wall. A square opening in the ceiling provides access to the attic and to the replacement belfry that was constructed in 2012. A rope coming down through the ceiling operates the bell, which was installed in 2016 and matches the original bell in age and style.⁸⁶

Associated Collections

The historic furnishings, architectural fragments, books, and other artifacts related to the church and school in Tolson's Chapel enhance its ability to convey the history and significance of African American institution-building during Reconstruction. Although the piano and many of the books relate to the history of the church after the end of the NHL period of significance (1866-1899), the collection includes items that are associated with the church and school during the period of significance as well. Among these are architectural fragments such as iron shutter hinges and a portion of the original curved chancel rail that provide clues about the appearance of the building before 1899. The pump organ and two wooden chairs were used in the church and may date to the period of significance as well. Hymnals and Bibles published in the nineteenth century were found in the church building, and in 2009, the Friends of Tolson's Chapel acquired a collection of books that belonged to Virginia Cook, the last surviving church member. Cook's collection included schoolbooks belonging to James Simons, who attended and taught in the school, and to Robert Levi Lee and Proshia Lee, who attended school in Tolson's Chapel in the 1880s. The Bible that Nancy Campbell/Camell donated to Tolson's Chapel is on display at Antietam National Battlefield.

⁸⁶ 2016 Easement Program, Change/Alteration Request, Friends of Tolson's Chapel Files. The original bell is owned by a local family that purchased it from the congregation in the 1970s.

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Evaluation of Integrity

Tolson's Chapel and School retains integrity of location, as well as a high degree of integrity of setting. Nearly all of Sharpsburg is included in the Sharpsburg Historic District (NRHP, 2008), which contains many eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century buildings. The block where Tolson's Chapel and School stands continues to be located at the edge of Sharpsburg, and the area immediately surrounding the town remains rural, thanks in part to easements designed to protect the historic character of the land surrounding Antietam National Battlefield. The block also retains its historic residential character. Although twentieth-century houses line the southern side of East High Street, their size and scale are compatible with the historic character of the block.

The size of the Tolson's Chapel property has not changed since the end of the period of significance, and no buildings or structures have been added since the end of the period of significance. The few additions to the site are small-scale and include an interpretive wayside, a sign, a fence and wall along the eastern boundary, and a retaining wall and concrete steps along the western boundary. Although most of the grave markers in the cemetery were placed after the end of the period of significance, their arrangement and design are consistent with the character of late nineteenth-century church cemeteries.

Overall, the church/school building possesses a high degree of integrity and retains the physical features that best convey its historical significance as a Reconstruction-era church and school. Starting in 2002, the Friends of Tolson's Chapel preserved and restored the building's structure and exterior, retaining evidence of workmanship in the structure and finishes and keeping historic materials in place whenever possible. As a result, the building's footprint, fenestration, windows, shutters, door, siding, and roofing match their appearance during the period of significance, giving the exterior a high degree of integrity of design and feeling.

During the restoration, severely deteriorated architectural elements required that some original elements be replaced in kind so that they match the surviving elements that were present during the period of significance. While most of the historic structural members were retained or repaired, much of the historic board-and-batten siding and the roofing was replaced due to rot and insect damage. The restoration also included reconstructing the belfry that was removed circa 1980. The footprint of the reproduction belfry was determined by marks on the roof, and the design was based on a 1976 photograph and local examples from the same time period and building type. The replacement roof shingles, board-and-batten siding, and belfry diminish the integrity of materials on the exterior, but these are not unusual replacements for a building of this type and age. Although many of the comparable properties have historic siding, few buildings from this era retain nineteenth-century roofing materials. The number of lost belfries is more difficult to assess since evidence of an earlier belfry typically comes from historic photographs, which are rare, or physical evidence located on the interior or underneath non-historic roofing. Because all of the replaced elements on Tolson's Chapel were based on physical or documentary evidence and materials were replaced in kind, the exterior still retains a high degree of integrity of design, workmanship, and feeling, allowing it to convey the property's character and appearance during the period of significance.

Because the interior contains architectural elements associated with its history as both a church and school during the period of significance, the interior is of great importance to conveying the property's significance. The interior of Tolson's Chapel retains a high degree of integrity of materials, design, workmanship, feeling, and association. The floor plan, interior finishes, and built-in furniture remain much as they did when the building functioned as a church and school. The pews date to the period of significance, and largely retain their historic arrangement; only two pews have been moved or removed since 1883. The pulpit and the chancel alcove were present during the period of significance, and the balcony and stairs at the south end of the building

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have seen no major changes since the nineteenth century. Most of the interior finishes from the period of significance remain intact, including the chancel railing, the liquid slate blackboards on the walls at the north end of the building, and substantial portions of the floor boards and the lath-and-plaster walls and ceilings. Though added after the end of the period of significance, the expanded chancel platform and the beadboard wainscoting are in keeping with the building's historic function as a church; these materials cover rather than replace earlier materials. As a result, they do not substantially detract from the overall integrity of the interior. As tangible evidence of the period when Tolson's Chapel served as a school, the carefully restored liquid slate is particularly important to the building's integrity and to its association with African American education during Reconstruction.

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Previous documentation on file (NPS):

Previously listed in the National Register (fill in 1 through 6 below) [is checked]
 Not previously listed in the National Register (fill in **only** 4, 5, and 6 below)

1. NR #: 08001012
2. Date of listing: October 21, 2008
3. Level of significance: State and Local
4. Applicable National Register Criteria: A [is checked] B C D
5. Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): A B C D E F G
6. Areas of Significance: Ethnic Heritage: Black

<input type="checkbox"/> Previously Determined Eligible for the National Register:	Date of determination:
<input type="checkbox"/> Designated a National Historic Landmark:	Date of designation:
<input type="checkbox"/> Recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey:	HABS No.
<input type="checkbox"/> Recorded by Historic American Engineering Record:	HAER No.
<input type="checkbox"/> Recorded by Historic American Landscapes Survey:	HALS No.

Location of additional data:

State Historic Preservation Office: X [is checked]
 Other State Agency:
 Federal Agency:
 Local Government:
 University:
Other (Specify Repository):

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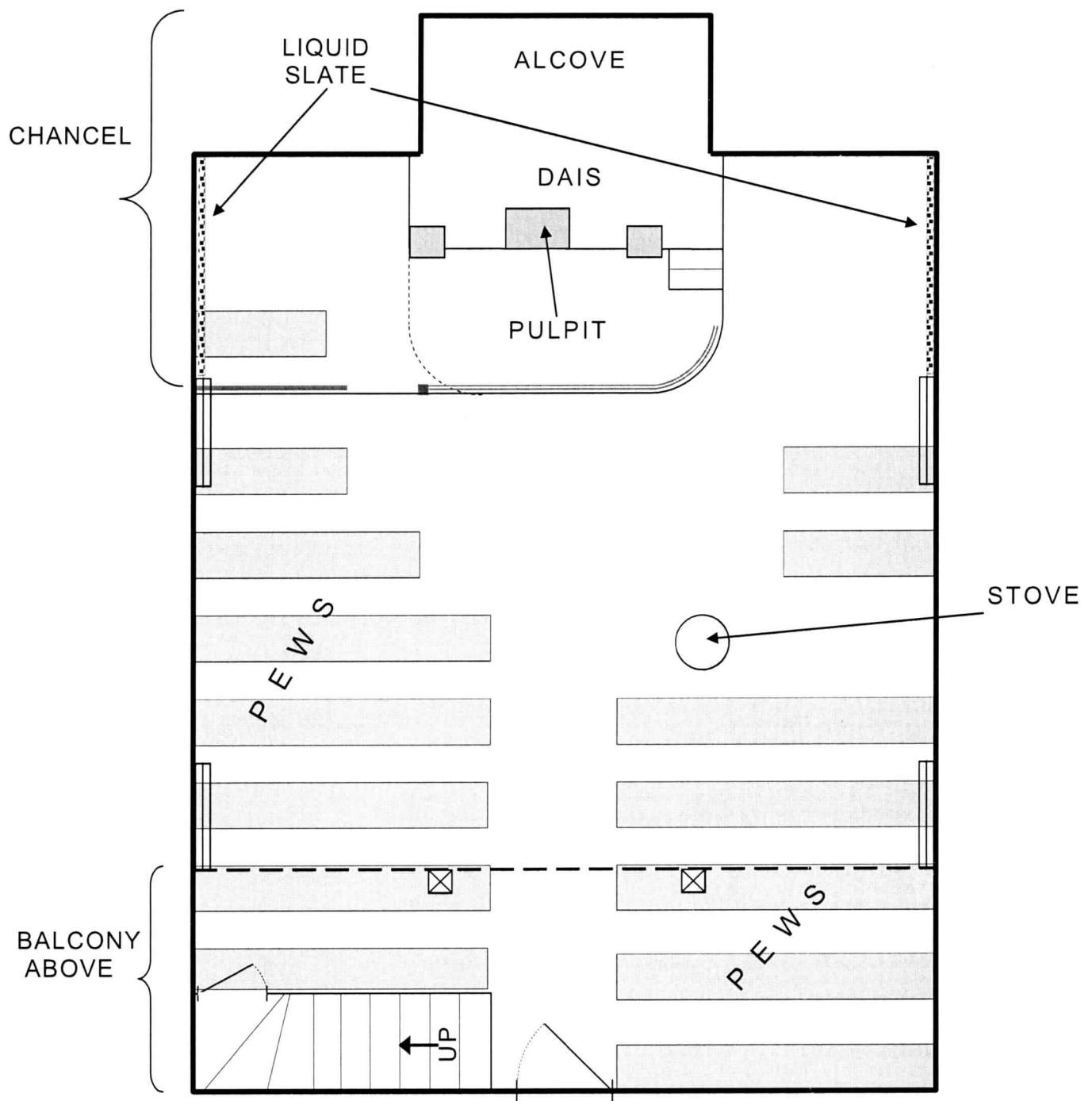
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Floor Plan
Tolson's Chapel and School
Sharpsburg, Washington County, Maryland
National Historic Landmark Nomination (September 2018)



Not to scale



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Location Map



Latitude-Longitude Coordinates

- A: 39.456697°, -77.746711°
- B: 39.456729°, -77.746566°
- C: 39.456163°, -77.746331°
- D: 39.456120°, -77.746485°

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The datum is WGS84, and the imagery date is 9/15/2015.










Site Plan

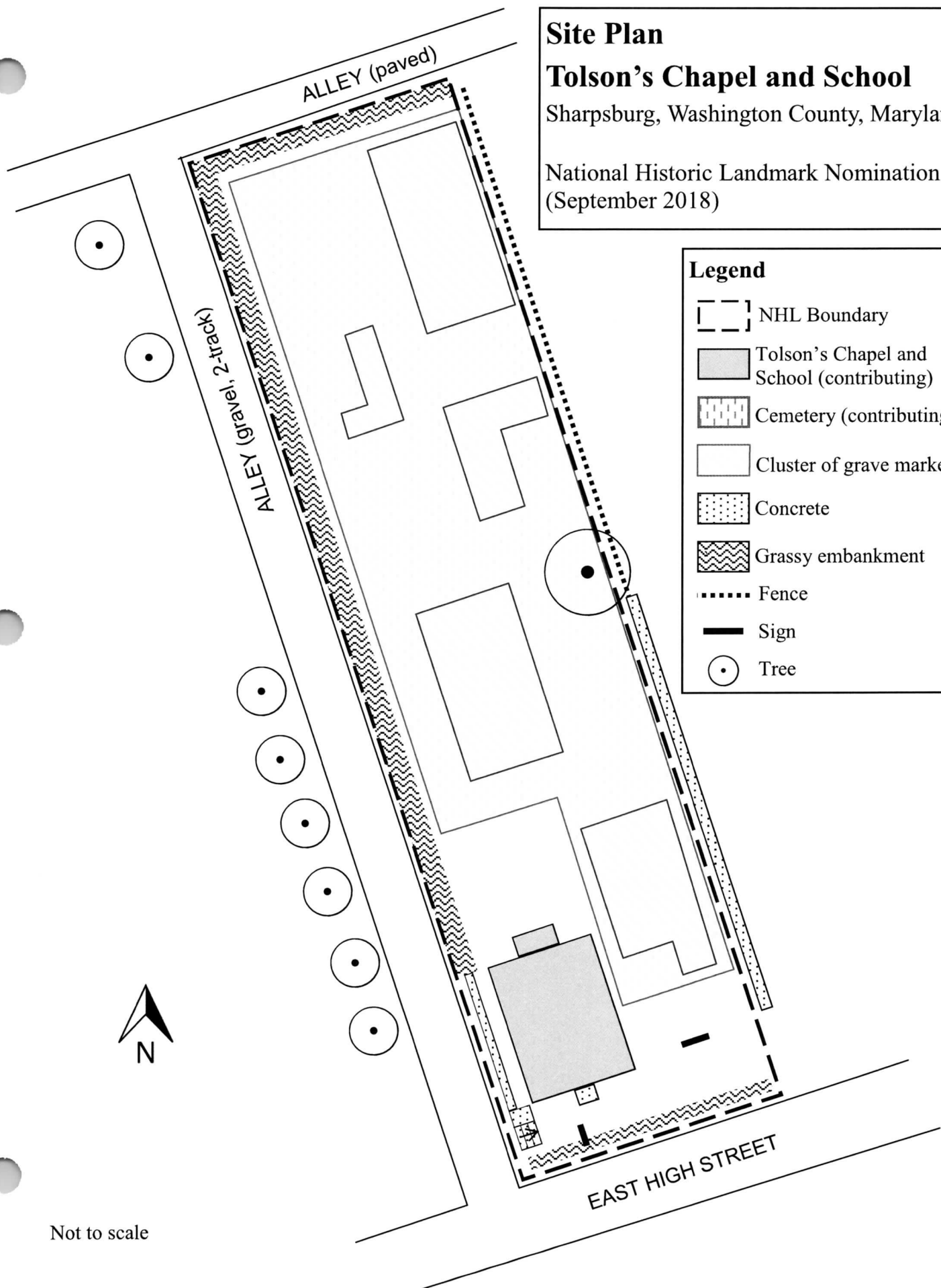
Tolson's Chapel and School

Sharpsburg, Washington County, Maryland

National Historic Landmark Nomination
(September 2018)

Legend

-  NHL Boundary
-  Tolson's Chapel and School (contributing)
-  Cemetery (contributing)
-  Cluster of grave markers
-  Concrete
-  Grassy embankment
-  Fence
-  Sign
-  Tree



Not to scale

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Tolson's Chapel and School

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

OMB Control No. 1024-0276 (Exp. 01/31/2019)

Photos/Figures/Maps

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Photo Log

Name of Property: Tolson's Chapel and School
City or Vicinity: Sharpsburg
County: Washington
State: MD
Photographer: Evelyn D. Causey
Date Photographed: November 8, 2017



1 of 10 South and west elevations of church/school, looking northeast, showing west alley.

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2 of 10 South and east elevations of church/school, looking northwest, showing southeast corner of cemetery.

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North and east elevations of church/school, looking southwest from cemetery towards E. High Street with cemetery in the foreground.



4 of 10 North and west elevations of church/school, looking southeast from west alley.

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Cemetery, looking northwest from east property line, showing east elevation of church/school.



6 of 10 Cemetery, looking south from northeast corner of property.

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Interior, looking northeast towards chancel from balcony, showing liquid slate (on right).



8 of 10 Interior, looking north towards chancel, showing liquid slate (on left).

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Interior, looking east, showing pews, stove, and balcony (on right).



10 of 10 Interior, looking southwest towards stair to balcony.

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Tolson's Chapel and School

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Photos/Figures/Maps

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Photo Key – Site and Exterior

Not to scale

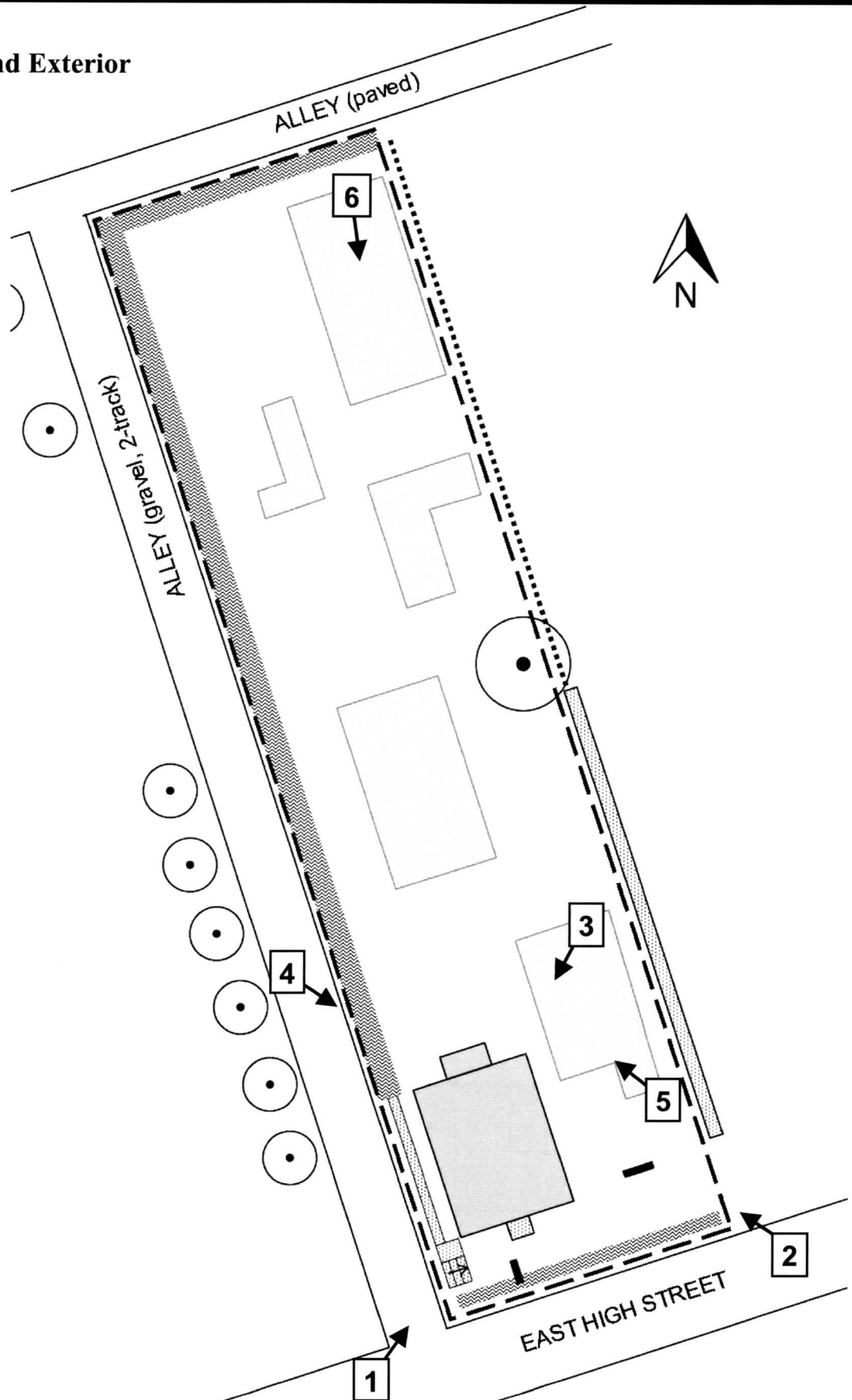
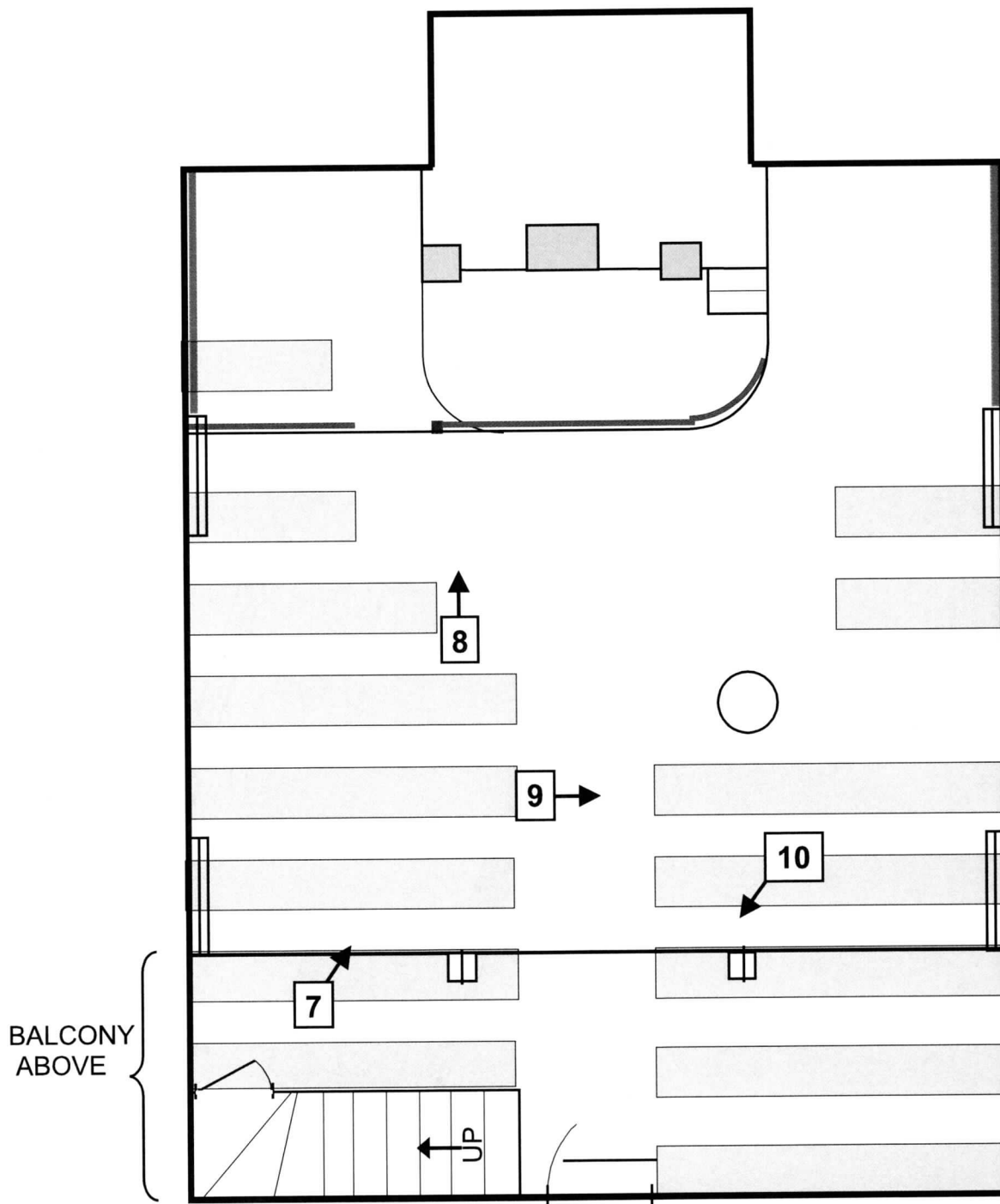


Photo Key – Interior

Not to scale



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

9-10-08
Date

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:

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

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:) _____

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

Washington County, Maryland

Name of Property

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Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

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

- Criteria A-D: Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past. 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. 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:

- Criteria A-G: owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes. removed from its original location. a birthplace or grave. a cemetery. a reconstructed building, object, or structure. a commemorative property. 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
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Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Approx. 1/4 acre

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	1 8	2 6 3 6 7 0	4 3 7 1 0 0 7	3		
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting
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.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetWA-II-702
Tolson's Chapel
name of propertySection number 7 Page 1Washington County, Maryland
county and state**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 104¹. 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.

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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

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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.

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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

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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.

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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

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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,"

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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,

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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

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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

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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

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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:

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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.

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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

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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

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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.

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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

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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 expenses [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 Cook⁸²

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.

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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

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
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WA-II-702
Tolson's Chapel
name of property

Washington County, Maryland
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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.

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WA-II-702
Tolson's Chapel
name of property

Washington County, Maryland
county and state

Section number 8 Page 18

- 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.

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Tolson's Chapel
name of property

Washington County, Maryland
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- 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 1/2 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.

United States Department of the Interior
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Washington County, Maryland
county and state

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

Washington County Land and Estate Records, Washington County Courthouse, Hagerstown, MD.

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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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Tolson's Chapel
name of property

Washington County, Maryland
county and state

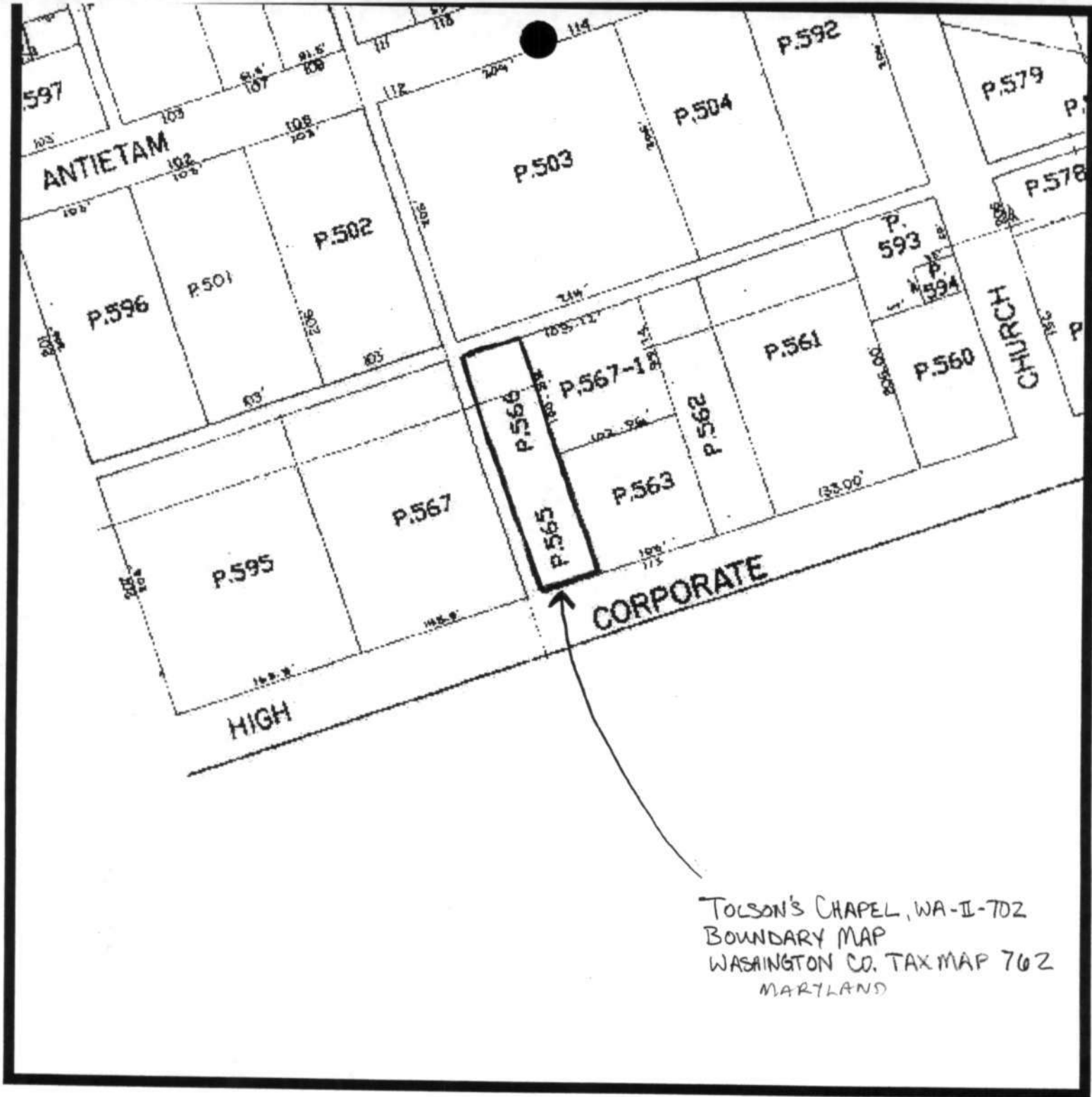
Geographical Data

Verbal Boundary Description

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

Boundary Justification

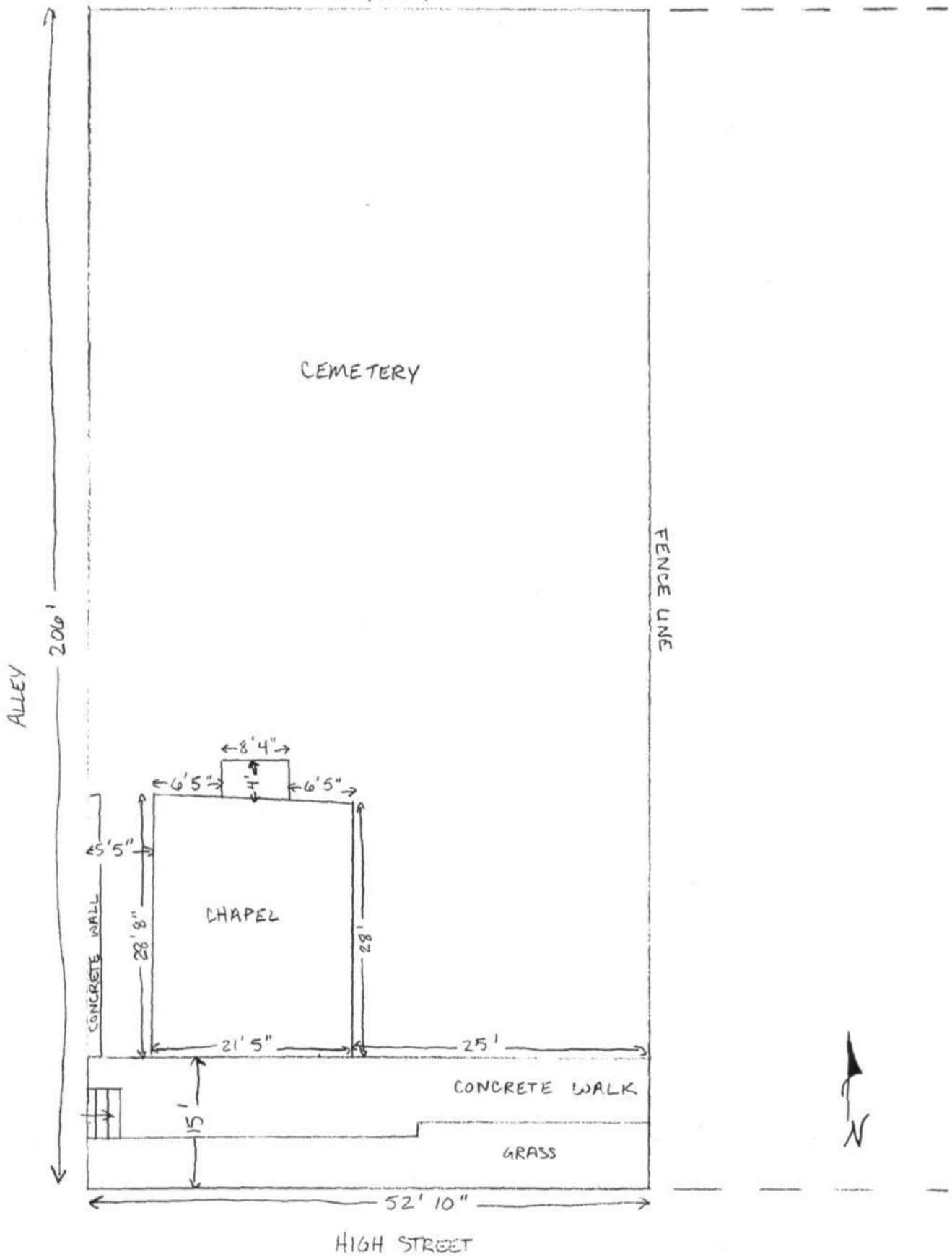
The boundary is the historic boundary of the chapel and cemetery lot.



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

WA-II-702

ALLEY



TOLSON'S CHAPEL SITE PLAN
16 SEPTEMBER 2003

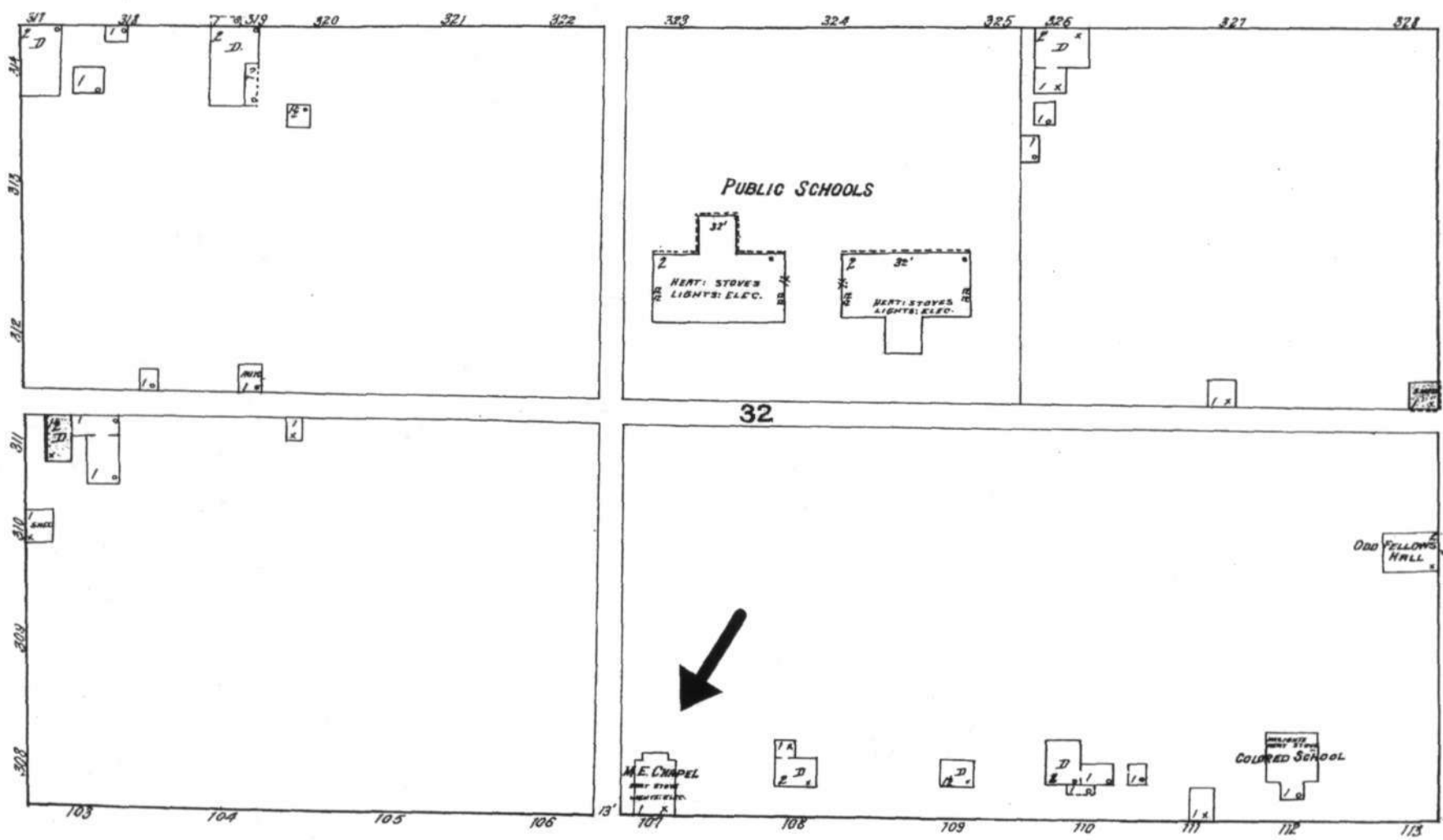
(NOT TO SCALE)

WASHINGTON CO., MD WA-II-702

S. MECHANIC

S. CHURCH

E. ANTIETAM

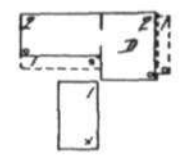
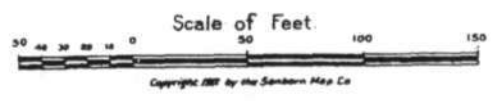


E. HIGH

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

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

35



HERALD

TOLSON'S CHAPEL, WA-II-70Z
WASHINGTON CO., MD

The Hagerstown Morning Herald,
November 8, 1976, (Washington
Co. Free Library, microfilm
collection)

8, 1976

Price 15¢

crowd

irl," says Miss Cook.

s light holders are still fastened to
wooden pillars. And the small,
balcony, "that cracked at that
several years ago," is still there.
thought of ever seeing the old
close its doors forever is "a very
ing but unfortunately, very
," Miss Cook says.

ere are only three colored
s here anymore. We've tried to
re membership. We're not a
tionist church. We hold our doors
all. But we just haven't grown,"

5.
e people of Sharpsburg have
od to us though. 'Deed they
m going to stay with the church
as I'm able. 'Deed I am. We've
wanted to keep it just like it

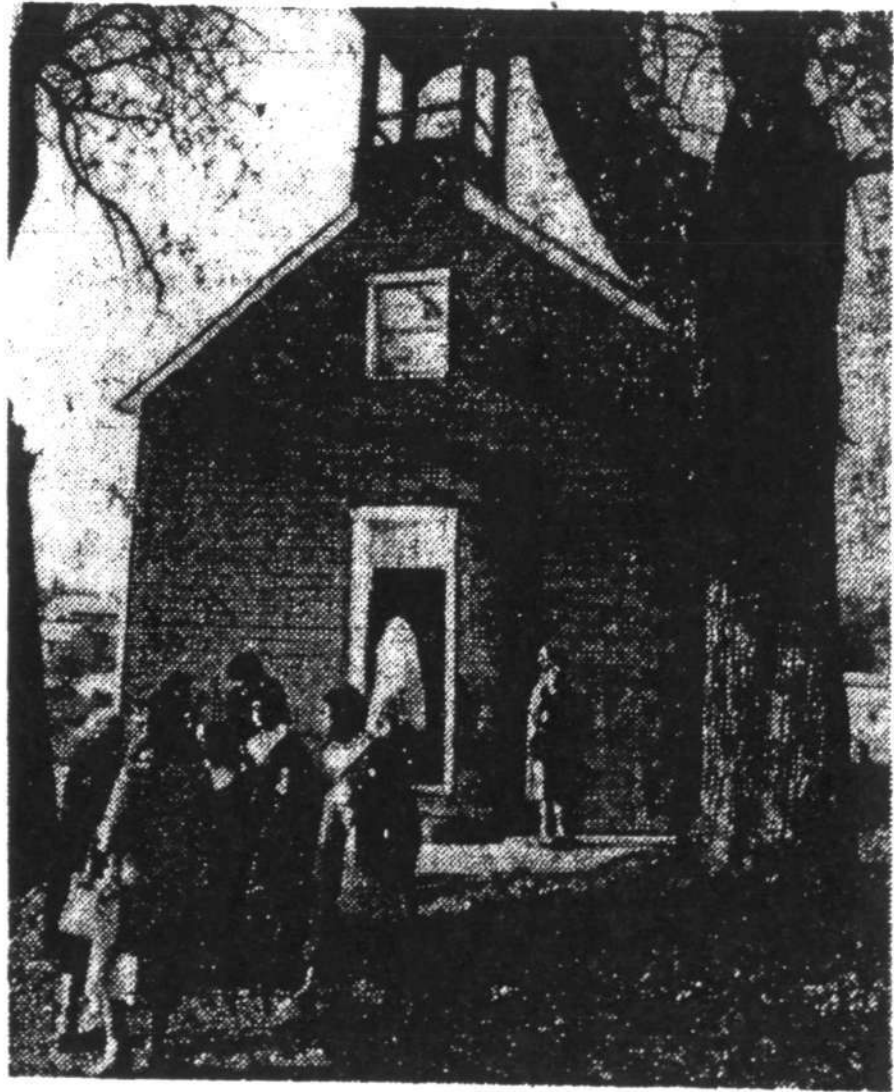


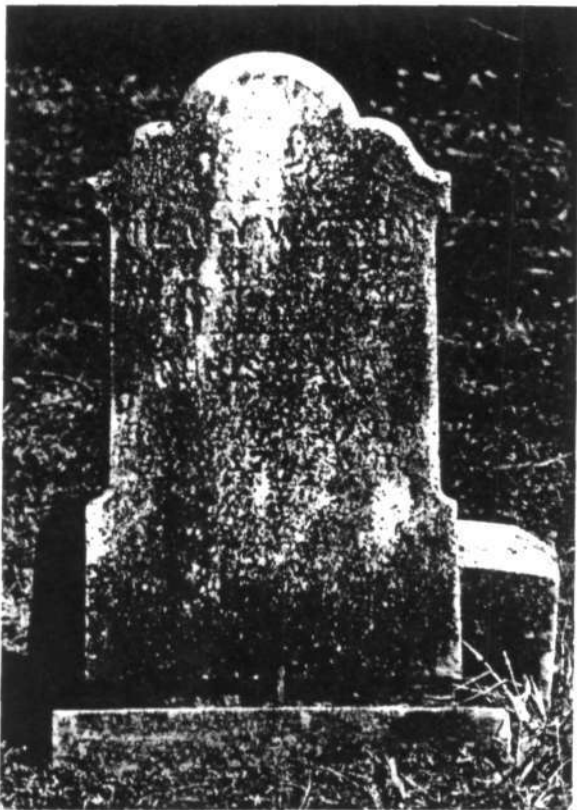
Photo by Gary Finster

RALLY DAY CROWD — Sunday's Rally Day services at Tolson Chapel in Sharpsburg drew a crowd of 30 — ten times the size of the little congregation's membership.

Tolson's Chapel, Washington County, Maryland, WA-II-702



The stone marking the graves of Jeremiah Cornelius Summers and Susan Summers. (EBW 2001)



The stone marking the graves of Hilary Watson and "Christiana" Watson. (EBW 2001)

Tolson's Chapel, Washington County, Maryland, WA-II-702



Tolson's Chapel in 1988, note double privy just behind the Chapel. (courtesy Laura Grove)

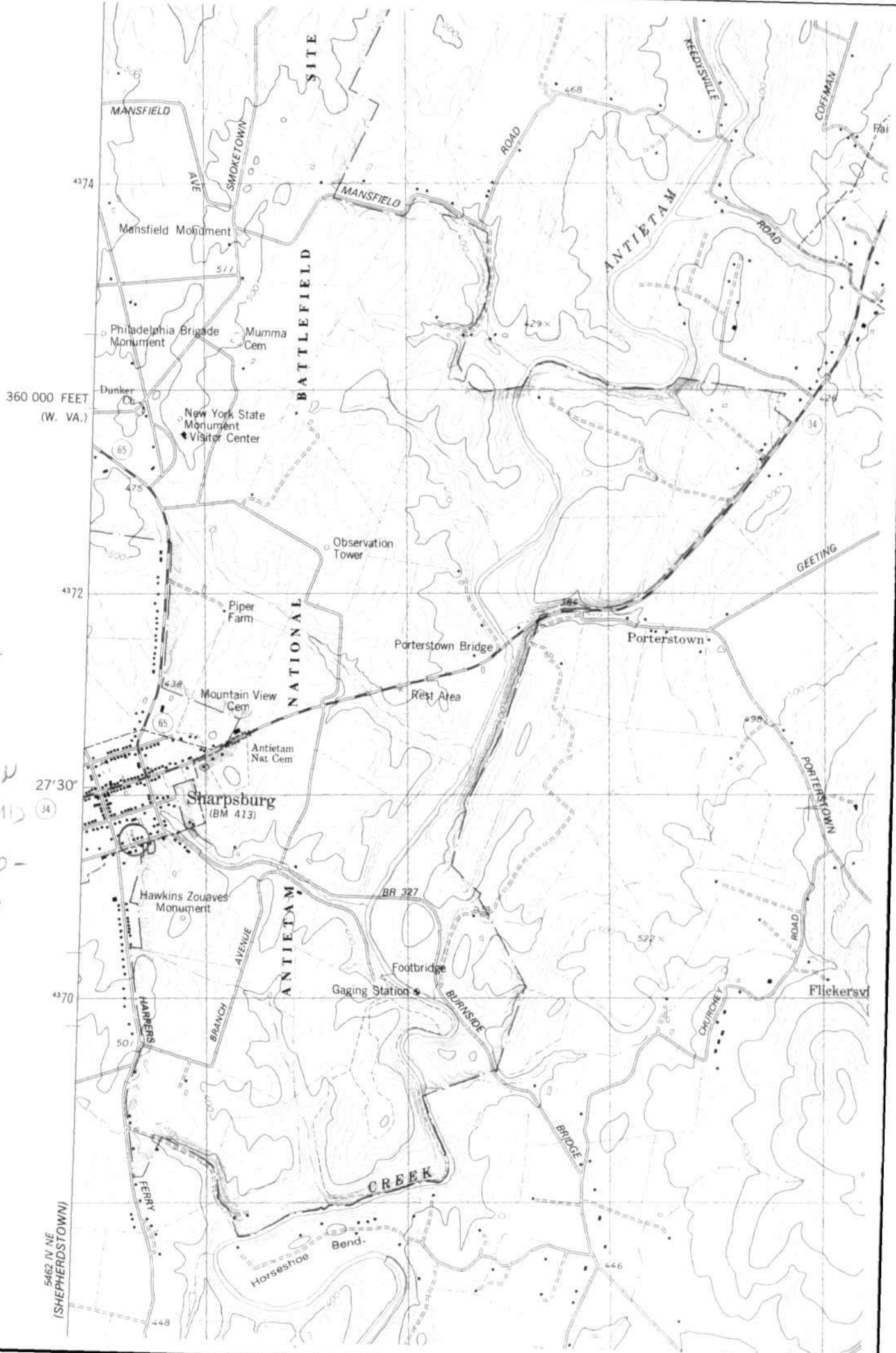


Tolson's Chapel as it appeared in 1988. (courtesy Laura Grove)



Tolson's Chapel as it appeared in 2001 and again as it appeared in 2003. (EBW)

WA-II-702
TOLSON'S
COPPER
WASHINGTON
COUNTY, MD
18-263670-
4371007



5462 N NE
(SHEPHERDSTOWN)



WA-II - 702

Tolson's Chapel

High St., Sharpsburg

Washington Co., MD

5/05

PS Reed

MDSHPD

S and W elevations view NE

1/25



WA-II-702

Tolson's Chapel

High St., Sharpsburg

Washington Co, MD

5/05

PS Reed

MDSHPO

S and E elevations: view N/W

2/25



WA-II-702

Tolson's Chapel

High St. Sharpsburg

Washington Co. MD

5/35

PSReed

MDST+PO

S and E elevations, view NW

3/25



WA-II-702

Tolson's Chapel

High St., Sharpsburg
Washington Co., MD

5/05

P Speed

MDSHPD

N elevation, view S

4/25



WA-II-702

Tolson's Chapel

High St., Sharpsburg

Washington Co MD

5/05

PSReed

MDSHPO

log detail, W elevation

5/25



WA-II-702

Tolson's Chapel
High St., Sharpsburg
Washington Co., MD
5/05

PSReed
MDSHPO

Board + Batten siding detail, under nave,
N elevation

6/25



WA-II-702

Tolson's Chapel

High St, Sharpsburg

Washington Co., MD

5/05

PSReed

MDSHPO

Cemetery and N elevation of Chapel

view S

7/25



WA-II-702

Tolson's Chapel

High St., Sharpsburg

Washington Co., MD

5/05

PS Reed

MDSHPO

U.S.C.T. gravestone in cemetery

8/25



WA-II-702

Tolson's Chapel

High St., Sharpsburg
Washington Co Md

5/05

PS Reed

MD SHPO

Interior view toward N wall

9/25



WA-II-702

Tolson's Chapel

High St., Sharpsburg

Washington Co MD

5/05

PS Reed

MDSHPO

Interior view toward N wall

10/25



WA-II-702

Tolson's Chapel

High St., Sharpsburg

Washington Co. MD

5/05

PS Reed

MDSHPD

Interior view toward S wall

11/25



WA-II-702

Tolson's Chapel

High St., Sharpsburg
Washington Co., MD

5/05

PSReed

MDSHPO

Interior view, E wall

12/25



WA-II-702

Tolson's Chapel

High St., Sharpsburg

Washington Co., MD

5/05

PS Reed

MDSHPO

Interior view, W wall

13/25



WA-II-702

Tolson's Chapel
High St., Sharpsburg
Washington Co., MD

5/05

PS Reed

MDS/HPO

Floor detail, location of previous stove

14/25



WA-II-70Z

Tolson's Chapel

High St., Sharpsburg

Washington Co. MD

5/05

PS Reed

MD SHPO

Wall detail, liquid slate paint, NE corner

15/25



WA-II-702

Tolson's Chapel

High St., Sharpsburg
Washington Co., MD

5/05

P. Steed

MDSAPO

Wall detail, liquid slate paint, NW corner

16/25



WA-II-702

Tolson's Chapel

High St., Sharpsburg

Washington Co., MD

5/05

PS Reed

MD SHPO

Ink jar found in Chapel attic

17/25



WA-II-702

Tolson's Chapel

High St. Sharpsburg

Washington Co., MD

5/05

PS Reed

MOSHPO

Oil lamp bracket and balcony support

18/25



WA-II-702

Tolson's Chapel

High St., Sharpsburg

Washington Co. MD

5/05

PS Reed

MDSHKO

oil lamp bracket detail

19/25



WA-II-702

Tolson's Chapel

High St., Sharpsburg

Washington Co., MD

5/65

PS Reed

MD SHPO

Interior, log construction detail, under
stairs

20/25



WA-II - 702

Tolson's Chapel

High St., Sharpsburg

Washington Co., MD

5/05

PS Reed

MDSHPO

Interior log construction detail, under stairs

21/25



WA-II-702

Tolson's Chapel

High St., Sharpsburg
Washington Co., MD

5/05

PS Reed

MDSHPO

Interior, stairs to balcony, SW corner

22/25



WA-II-702

Tolson's Chapel

High St., Sharpsburg

Washington Co., MD

5/05

PSpeed

MDSHPO

Interior, balcony

23/25



WA-II-702

Tolson's Chapel

High St., Sharpsburg

Washington Co., MD

5/05

PSReed

MDSHPO

Interior view from doorway

24/25



WA-II-702

Tolson's Chapel

High St., Sharpsburg
Washington Co., MD

5/05

PS Reed

MDSHPO

Artifacts found in chapel attic

25
/25

Tolson's Chapel
WA-II-0702
East High Street
Sharpsburg Vicinity
Washington County, MD
Catoctin Center for Regional Studies
Frederick Community College
July 2009

Addendum

Number 7 Page 2

Since the National Register of Historic Places was prepared for Tolson's Chapel in 2005, the building has undergone restoration and stabilization work, changing its exterior appearance. Restoration workers stabilized the log/braced frame walls and replaced rotted logs, braces and posts with wood or with concrete block in areas where deterioration was advanced and the logs completely rotted. New board and batten siding, patterned after the original material, replaced the asphalt shingles that covered the building. The original wood windows were removed, repaired and reinstalled, and the foundation stabilized where necessary. The transom and gable window were re-opened and German siding installed in the gables to match the original material, some of which remains. The exterior is painted white, matching paint evidence on the original siding material. Work on the building continues.

Tolson's Chapel
WA-II-0702
East High Street
Sharpsburg Vicinity
Washington County, MD
Catoctin Center for Regional Studies
Frederick Community College
July 2009

Addendum

Number 9 Page 2

Edith B. Wallace, "Reclaiming Forgotten History: Preserving Rural African-American Resources in Washington County, Maryland" (master's thesis, Goucher College, 2003), 16, 33, 55, 56, 66, 95.



WA-11-0702

Tolson's Chapel, Sharpsburg, Washington Co.

Paula Reed

6/09

MDSTHP

NE view

1/6



WA-II-0702

Tolson's Chapel, Sharpsburg, Washington Co. MD

Paula Reed

6/09

MDSHPD

SW view

2/6



WA-11-0702

Tolson's Chapel, Sharpsburg, Washington Co.

Paula Reed

6/09

MDS:HC

Corner Stone

3/6



WA-II-0702
Tolson's Chapel,

Sharpsburg, Washington Co, MD

Paula Reed

6/09

MDSHPO

Cemetery, Hilary Watson, Marker

4/6



WA-II-0702

Tolson's chapel, Sharpsburg, Washington Co
MD

Paula Reed

6/09

MDSHPC

Cemetery, US CT, Marker

5/6



Summers

Summers

Died Nov. 18 1825

Born 78th Dec 1826

—
Born 78th Dec 1826

WA-II-0702
Tolson's Chapel

Paula Reed
6109
MDSHPD

Cemetery, Jeremiah Summers marker

6/6

Sharpsburg, Washington
Co. MD