



## HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION FREDERICK COUNTY, MARYLAND

30 North Market Street, Third Floor Frederick, Maryland 21701 (301) 600-7477



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**CASE NO. CR 21-01**  
**NOMINATION TO COUNTY REGISTER**  
**STAFF REPORT**

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### SUMMARY

**Property:** Rocky Springs Chapel and School House  
7817 Rocky Springs Road, Frederick vicinity  
**Applicants:** Historic Rocky Springs Chapel Inc.

Public Hearing for consideration of placing the property located at 7817 Rocky Springs Road, Frederick, Rocky Springs Chapel and Rocky Springs School House, on the Frederick County Register of Historic Places. Submitted by Historic Rocky Springs Chapel, Inc., property owners of record.

The public hearing for the nomination of the property to the Frederick County Register of Historic Places will be held virtually at 7:00 p.m., or thereafter, on February 3, 2021.



## **DESIGNATION STATUS**

The property contains two buildings which both are listed on the Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties. Rocky Springs School House is listed under survey numbers F-3-95 and Rocky Springs Chapel is listed under F-3-96.

Furthermore, the applicant has included a letter, dated August 28, 2019, from the Maryland Department of Planning, Maryland Historical Trust (MHT) regarding a Maryland Historical Trust Preservation Easement as part of a FY2020 Maryland Heritage Areas Authority Grant awarded to the Rocky Springs School House. This letter indicates that:

the Rocky Springs School House is eligible for individual listing on the National Register of Historic Places, and therefore MHT will require the conveyance of a 15-year term preservation easement on the interior and exterior of the school house, the surrounding area of land inside the loop drive, and archeological resources on the surface or subsurface of the property.

The applicant submitted the easement boundary survey description and plat of the proposed easement boundaries. A recorded easement was not provided with the application. Typically with MHT easements, proposed changes to the property under easement will be required to be reviewed by MHT staff for approval.

## **SUPPORTING MATERIALS**

The applicant submitted a completed County Register nomination form, the Maryland Historical Trust Review forms for both Rocky Springs Chapel and the School House, written historical narratives for each structure, chain of titles and deed records for each building, and digital photographs.

## **SITE VISITS**

Site visit dates are on Friday, January 22, 2 – 4 p.m., and Saturday, January 23, 10 – 12 p.m. Commissioners who cannot attend either of these dates are urged to familiarize themselves with the exterior on their own time.

## **REVIEW CONSIDERATIONS**

### **1) Analysis**

The documentation submitted by the applicant regarding the history and significance of the property clearly establishes the architectural and historical significance of the Rocky Springs Chapel and the Rocky Springs School House, indicating that the property is eligible for listing under Criteria 6B(1A), 6B(1B), 6B(1C), 6B(1D), and 6B(2A).

## 2) History Summary

According to the documentation provided by the applicant, Rocky Springs Church and Rocky Springs School House were once two separate parcels that were combined as one following Historic Rocky Springs Chapel, Inc.'s acquisition of both parcels in 2015. Both buildings have association with the Church of the United Brethren in Christ (U.B.), the first Protestant denomination founded in the United States. According to U.B. history, the U.B. was organized in 1800 in the Rocky Springs area of Frederick County at the home of Frederick Kemp (one mile east of Rocky Springs School House). Frederick Kemp's farm was routinely used as a gathering place by the founders and early leaders of the U.B., and as soon as the Rocky Springs School House was built, the U.B. congregation moved its religious services and Sunday School here. The schoolhouse was used for religious purposes until the Rocky Springs Chapel was built next door in 1882.

The Rocky Springs School House was constructed in 1839 and served as Frederick County Public School number 26 until 1930. Through the influence of the Church of the United Brethren in Christ, the school was built to not only serve as a school but also as a sanctuary for the U.B. An 1836 supplement to the "1825 Act to provide for the Public Instruction of Youth in Primary Schools" gave school district trustees the authority to permit any of the schoolhouses to be used for public worship. The Rocky Springs School House was used for both purposes for approximately 42 years until 1882 when the Rocky Springs Chapel was built. It continued as a public school building until 1930 when it was decommissioned as a public school and sold by the Board of Education to the trustees of the Rocky Springs Chapel to be used as a meeting and community center.

Rocky Springs School House has also been documented to be the site of a cavalry skirmish on July 8, 1864, just prior to the Battle of Monocacy. According to E.Y. Goldsborough's book *Early's Great Raid, He Advances Through Maryland, Battle of Monocacy*, written in 1898, two maps are depicted with Rocky Springs School House. Goldsborough recounts that:

Our cavalry skirmished with the rebel cavalry during the day (Friday, July 8th), along Catocin Mountain, near Rocky Springs School House, and the artillery stationed near the city limits on the north side of the road had a spirited fight with a rebel battery on Hagan's Hill, about a mile west of the city...

A Civil War Trails marker was placed at the Rocky Springs School House in 2018 to interpret the skirmish.

The Rocky Springs Chapel, as previously mentioned, was built in 1882 just northwest of the Rocky Springs School House. It was utilized as a house of worship for the U.B. until 1909 when services stopped due to declining membership. The chapel was sold on April 30, 1909 by trustees of the U.B. for Frederick Circuit to the newly formed community group "The Rocky Springs Chapel," a group consisting of Reformers, Lutherans, Methodists, and United Brethren.

The chapel was utilized continuously for religious and social gatherings until 1982 and sporadically until 2011. Historic Rocky Springs Chapel, Inc. was deeded both properties in 2015.

### **3) Historic, Archaeological, and Cultural Significance**

The property is eligible for listing under the following criteria:

- 6B(1A): *The property has significant character, interest, or value as part of the development, heritage, or cultural characteristics of the County, state, or nation;*
- 6B(1B): *The property is the site of an historic event;*
- 6B(1C): *The property is identified with a person or group of persons who influenced society; and*
- 6B(1D): *The property exemplifies the cultural, economic, social, political, or historic heritage of the County and its communities.*

The direct association of both the Rocky Springs School House and Rocky Springs Chapel to the first Protestant denomination to be found in the United States is well documented in the materials provided by the applicant. According to the documentation submitted, the U.B. can be traced back to 1767 in Lancaster, Pennsylvania where William Otterbein moved by a story told by Martin Boehm embraced him and said in German “We are brethren.” Together these men along with other colleagues traveled through Maryland, Pennsylvania and Virginia and held meetings in barns and private houses spreading their messages largely to the German immigrants. By about 1790 these meetings became larger and longer events and Frederick (Peter) Kemp’s farmstead in Rocky Springs became a principal gathering place for these religious events.

In *Landmark History of the United Brethren Church*, published in 1911, the author, Reverend Commodore I. B. Brane writes:

*After a period of thirty years the first general gathering of the “unsectarian ministers” occurred at the home of Peter Kemp, some two miles west of Frederick, Maryland, on the 25th of September, 1800. There and then the United Brethren Church was born...when they came together at Peter Kemp's, representing a widely scattered constituency of probably 25,000, a multiplicity of sacred influences and associations lifted up their voices unitedly...The conference assumed legislative functions, organized itself and its adhering population into a church...*

Thirteen other United Brethren congregations were established in Frederick County between 1801 and 1902. The Rocky Springs United Brethren congregation utilized the Kemp farmstead until approximately 1839, when the Rocky Springs School House was built. It is considered one of the denomination’s pioneer church-schools. Public education and worship services took

place in this building for approximately 42 years. The schoolhouse continued to serve the Rocky Springs community as a public school until 1930 and then as a meeting and community center.

In 1882 the Rocky Springs Chapel was built next door and worship services and Sunday school were moved into this building. The chapel served the U.B. congregation until 1909 and continued to serve as a house of worship until 1982 as a Union Church, a congregation consisting of several denominations.

Interestingly, the U.B. split into two groups in 1889, a majority liberal block and a minority conservative block, based on opinions on modifying the church's constitution and other issues. The minority conservative block is still in existence today while the majority liberal block merged in 1946 with the Evangelical Church that in turn merged to form the United Methodist Church in 1968. Both denominations trace their history to the Frederick (Peter) Kemp farmstead, Rocky Springs, and Frederick County.

Additionally, Rocky Springs School House was the site of a cavalry skirmish between about 100 members of the Eighth Illinois Cavalry (U.S.A.) and 400 members of the First and Second Maryland Cavalry (C.S.A.) on July 8, 1864, just prior to the Battle of Monocacy. According to *Early's Great Raid, He Advances Through Maryland, Battle of Monocacy*, written in 1898 by E.Y. Goldsborough, Goldsborough recounts

Our cavalry skirmished with the rebel cavalry during the day (Friday, July 8th), along Catoctin Mountain, near Rocky Springs School House, and the artillery stationed near the city limits on the north side of the road had a spirited fight with a rebel battery on Hagan's Hill, about a mile west of the city...

The book also depicts two maps that illustrate Rocky Springs School House. In 2018, a Civil War Trails marker was placed to interpret the skirmish.

The property's associations with the group of people responsible for the organization of the first Protestant denomination to be created in the United States, which spread and expanded across the nation, illustrates how this property is significant for its interest and value in the development of the community but also the development and expansion of religion in the County, State, and nation. Together the property's evolution from school-worship house to schoolhouse and adjoining chapel exemplifies the development pattern between public schools and places of worship that existed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Finally, the property's association with the Civil War and the Battle of Monocacy is a significant event both locally and nationally.

#### **4) Architectural and Design Significance**

The property is eligible under criteria 6B(2A):

*The property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or architecture.*

The Rocky Springs School House is a rectangular shaped, one-story, building constructed of stone under what used to be a gable roof. The north gable end is covered with German siding. Six over six wooden window sashes are located in the east and west elevations and one is located in the south elevation. A concrete block addition was added to the rear elevation after 1930. The Rocky Springs School House is a rare example of a rural stone schoolhouse from the 19<sup>th</sup> century that also served as a religious meetinghouse. To date only two other rural stone schoolhouses have been surveyed and still remain in Frederick County, the Bethel School (F-3-94) and the Mountain View School (F-8-113).

The Rocky Springs Chapel is also a rectangular shaped, one-story building but is wood framed and covered in German siding. A standing-seam metal gable roof covers the building with gable returns at the gable ends. A foyer projects from the center bay of the south elevation and is flanked on either side by four-over-four segmental-arched windows. Four bays are located on each of the east and west elevations also containing four-over-four segmental-arched windows. A frame shed addition is located on the north elevation and is also covered in German siding.

These buildings are good examples of rural 19<sup>th</sup> century institutions in Frederick County, the rural church and the rural schoolhouse. They both retain few changes to their exteriors and retain their form and plan.



**Rocky Springs Chapel and School House, December 2019 Aerial Photograph.**

## **RECOMMENDATION**

Staff recommends the Rocky Springs Chapel and School House property for designation to the Frederick County Register of Historic Places pursuant to Criterion 6B(1A), 6B(1B), 6B(1C), 6B(1D), and 6B(2A) as described in Section 1-23-6B of the County Code.

If the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) recommends the property for local designation, the HPC will submit a letter of recommendation to the County Council for final action.