



HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION FREDERICK COUNTY, MARYLAND

30 North Market Street, Third Floor Frederick, Maryland 21701 (301) 600-1147



CASE NO. DOE 23-04 / CR 24-03 COUNTY REGISTER NOMINATION STAFF REPORT

SUMMARY

Property: **Liberty Female Seminary**
12134 Main Street, Libertytown

Applicant: **Lisa and Edna Kokal**

Public Hearing for consideration of nominating the property located at 12134 Main Street, Libertytown, Liberty Female Seminary, to the Frederick County Register of Historic Places. Submitted by Lisa and Edna Kokal, property owners of record.

The public hearing for the nomination to the Frederick County Register of Historic Places will be held at 6:30 p.m., or thereafter, on April 3, 2024.

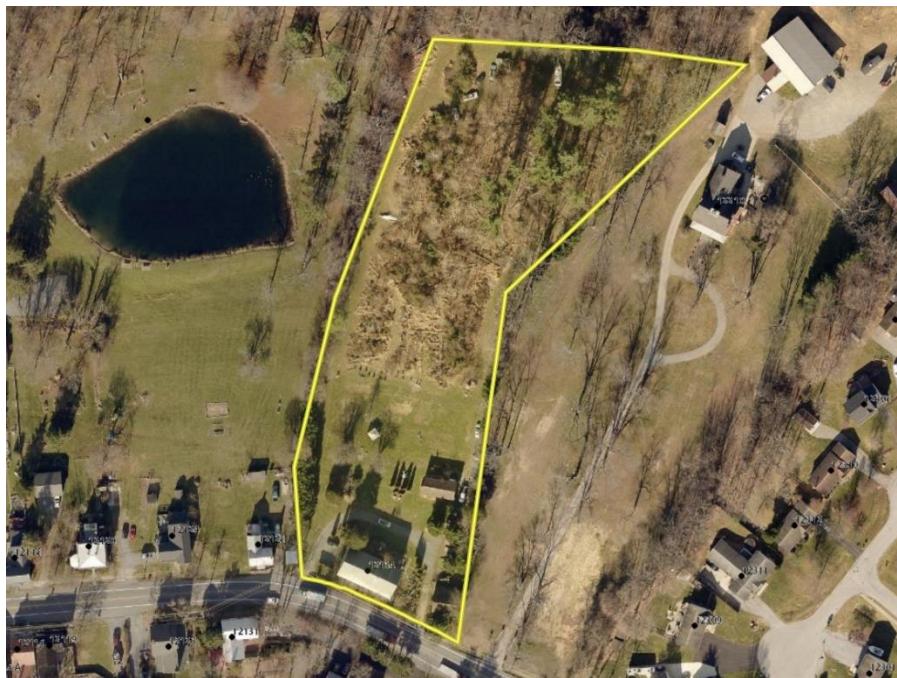


Figure 1: Subject Property outlined in yellow.

DESIGNATION STATUS

The property is listed in the Liberytown Survey District F-8-63 as a contributing structure. The property contains the stone academy, now a residence, and two barns. The nominated property encompasses approximately 0.344 acres of land and includes just the stone building. The Historic Preservation Commission determined the property eligible for listing under Criteria 6B(1A) and 6B(2A) at their November 1, 2023 meeting.

SUPPORTING MATERIALS

A completed County Register nomination form, maps, a statement of significance, and photographs were submitted. Staff assisted with writing the architectural and historical description of the property.

SITE VISITS

Site visit dates were scheduled for October 28 and 29, 2023 during the determination of eligibility hearing. Commissioners who could not attend were encouraged to view the property from the public right-of-way.

REVIEW CONSIDERATIONS

1) Analysis

The architectural and historical significance of the Liberty Female Seminary is documented in the supporting materials. Additional research was completed on the property following the properties favorable determination of eligibility. The property is associated with early education and women's history. Based on the information provided, Staff finds the property is eligible for listing under Criteria 6B(1A), 6B(1D), and 6B(2A).

2) History Summary

The Liberty Female Seminary building was built circa 1820 in Liberytown. The school opened April 1826. The Liberty Female Seminary was the first and only female seminary in Liberytown and may have been one of the first established in the county. The first headmaster was Elihu H. Rockwell, who has been accredited with starting the school; however, an advertisement in the *Frederick-Town Herald* dated May 20, 1826 suggests that the Trustees of the Liberty-Town Lancastrian and Grammer School may have been the founders. The May 20, 1826 advertisement announced the engagement of Mr. Rockwell as headmaster. In 1834, Elihu Rockwell purchased the property. He sold the property in 1852 to Jonathan Browning. The seminary continued under Browning's ownership with Mr. Brockett serving as headmaster and Rev. and Mrs. L. A. Loveland serving as teachers. The school continued to operate through 1873. No records have been identified to indicate the school continued past 1873. The Brownings maintained ownership until 1909 when it was sold to Roy Gardner. It most likely was converted in the last quarter of the

1800s into housing. The period of significance for this property is circa 1820 through 1873 when the building was first constructed through to its last year operating as the Liberty Female Seminary.

3) Historic, Archaeological, and Cultural Significance Criteria

The property is eligible for listing under this category for meeting criteria 6B(1A) and 6B(1D) as outlined in Chapter 1-23-6B(1) of the Frederick County Code:

- 6B(1A): *The property has significant character, interest, or value as part of development, heritage, or cultural characteristics of the county, state, or nation.*
- 6B(1D): *The property exemplifies the cultural, economic, social, political, or historic heritage of the County and its communities.*

The property has significant character, interest, and value in the development, heritage, and culture of the County, State, and exemplifies the cultural, economic, social, and historic heritage of the County and its communities. The property is the earliest educational institution in Libertytown and is possibly the earliest Female Seminary in Frederick County and the State. Documented female seminaries on the Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties date between 1835 and 1876. In Frederick County, other female seminaries included the Frederick Female Seminary (opened 1845), the Burkittsville Female Seminary (opened 1866), and Barleywood Female Seminary (opened 1835). All the currently known seminaries in Frederick County opened after Liberty Female Seminary.

Women's education in the early 19th century underwent a significant change. It first began with male institutions. School curriculums broadened as new subjects such as history, philosophy, and the natural sciences were created. The expansion of educational institutions gave increasing access to schooling for many boys and young men, including those from rural and lower-class backgrounds. Women's education subsequently followed as a greater demand for teachers was needed. Teaching as a vocation was considered appropriate for young, single women who had often grown up teaching their younger siblings. The post-Civil War intellectual and religious enthusiasm that was spreading allowed women's education to take considerable strides, quickly becoming a central tenet of a newfound evangelical ideology.

Education of women shifted from solely ornamental and artistic pursuits to more "masculine" areas of study such as Latin, science, and mathematics. By the 1830s, wealthy parents were expected to send their daughters to educational institutions that offered these subjects that would allow their daughters to think for themselves, be a positive influence in their homes and communities, and by extension, the country.

In general, seminaries adhered to a professionalism and rigor that often lacked in other women's boarding and finishing schools. A great emphasis was placed on rules and discipline. Unexcused tardiness and absence were unacceptable. Classrooms were orderly and uniform. The boarding life of students was heavily regimented. Seminaries also followed strict religious observations. While some were denominational, many were deemed "nonsectarian," yet even nonsectarian seminaries were faith-based, providing Bible studies, in-school sermons, and encouraging students to attend their own church of faith weekly.

Furthermore, the success of female seminaries had a profound effect on the trajectory of the nation. By 1850, there were 6,085 known seminaries and academies in the United States teaching women, either exclusively or through co-education. According to federal census data, women's literacy rates had doubled to equal that of men. Women's employment increased particularly in the vocation of teaching. This shift provided opportunity for economic security that had rarely existed before, particularly for the growing population of unmarried women. As the nation shifted into an industrial capitalist society, women were getting married a little less and a little later in life. A seminary education provided access to employment in an industry that was stable and growing every day. Women who never married, or who married and experienced unforeseen losses of wealth or stability from their male counterparts, could navigate through both financial and societal uncertainties for the first time.

In addition to its significance to women's education, it is also significant for early education in Libertytown. Although it was a private institution, it was the first school to be built solely for the purpose of education in Libertytown. The first public school in Libertytown was not in operation until 1850. The trustees of the Liberty Female Seminary referred to themselves as the Liberty-Town Lancastrian and Grammer School, indicating that the school may have utilized a model of education known as the Lancasterian system or also referred to as the Monitorial system. This was an instruction model laid out by Joseph Lancaster, a British-born educator. It was built to accommodate the education of many students by only one teacher. The students would be arranged into classes based on skill or knowledge, not age. Students would advance from class to class based on mastery of the subject matter and more accomplished students would help in monitoring students in lower levels. It was a system that did not last long since the teacher was often not well qualified, and the number of students was often too many for one teacher. However, it influenced education systems across the globe from about 1798 to 1830.

4) Architectural and Design Significance Criteria

The property is eligible under this category for meeting criteria 6B(2A) as outlined in Chapter 1-23-6B(2) of Frederick County Code:

- *6B(2A): The property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or architecture.*

The Liberty Female Seminary is an excellent example of Georgian style architecture represented in an institutional building. It embodies characteristics of symmetrical form and fenestration, multi-paned windows, side gabled roof, stone walls, transom window over paneled front doors, cornice with dentils, and corner quoins. The building can convey its historic architectural character through these characteristics as well as the form and mass of the building. The property retains a high level of integrity.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends the Liberty Female Seminary for designation to the Frederick County Register of Historic Places pursuant to Criterion 6B(1A), 6B(1D), and 6B(2A) as described in Section 1-23-6B of the County Code.