

WI-424

1921-1923

Bethesda United Methodist Church
Salisbury
Public worship

Construction of the Bethesda Methodist Protestant Church was begun in November 1921 with a ground-breaking ceremony. Four months later, in March 1922, a service initiating the laying of the cornerstone was witnessed by a standing-room crowd of onlookers. A reporter for *The Wicomico News* stated:

The stone was lowered to its place. The first trowel of cement was laid by Mr. William Humphrey Rounds, the senior male member of the church and the second was laid by Master Samuel Tilghman Morris, the youngest member, who had united with the church at the morning service.

For more than a year after the cornerstone ceremony, stonemasons and carpenters, as well as a host of other tradesmen, worked together in completing the late Gothic Revival church that dominates the corner of North Division and William streets in the center of the Newtown neighborhood. Masterfully crafted in Mt. Airy granite and limestone, the church was built along a traditional medieval plan with an entrance and bell tower that fronts a cross-shaped nave and transept. The church, elevated on a raised foundation, has a strong vertical emphasis characteristic of Gothic design. The diagonal axis on the corner lot, coupled with its three story tower, provides the church with a commanding presence surely intended by the architect and the congregation. Leaded colored glass fills pointed arch window openings that pierce the tower and sanctuary walls. Attached to the back of the sanctuary is a two-story Sunday School room wing that followed what was at the time called the "Akron Plan." A center assembly room on each floor was ringed with small classrooms

partitioned by curtains.

The Bethesda Methodists, however, did not begin worshipping in such an auspicious structure. Founded in 1841, the small congregation of Methodist Protestant followers cobbled together funds to erect a small frame chapel in the Camden neighborhood on a high spot overlooking the Wicomico River. The small congregation occupied the Camden chapel for nearly thirty years, until the increase in congregants warranted a larger structure. It was decided to relocate to a site on Broad Street across from the Presbyterian church. Over the course of two years, the Bethesda congregation financed construction of a new frame church. Mention of the construction was included the church periodical, *The Methodist Protestant*. The November 12, 1870 issue stated:

On the last Sabbath in October, the Chapel part of the new church at Salisbury was dedicated to the worship of God with appropriate ceremonies. It is a room twenty-four by thirty-four feet, neatly finished. It is immediately in the rear of the proposed new structure and will join to it. A large figured glass window forms the division between the church and chapel. The window can be folded back, so that the two rooms can be used as one. The main building is under one roof, and will be completed without unnecessary delay. It is 34 x 54 feet and is surmounted with a steeple. The general plan of the building is admirable. It will be an ornament to the town, and a credit to our Conference.

During the second half of the nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth century, Salisbury developed into the largest city on the peninsula. With the construction boom in housing within the Newtown neighborhood between 1880 and 1920, the Bethesda congregation once again outgrew its accommodations.

Under the leadership of Dr. Richard L. Shipley, who arrived in 1919, the congregation financed construction of the handsome granite and limestone Gothic Revival cathedral. Upon completion in the spring of 1923 a special service was held on June 3rd. On that Sunday morning, the congregation, numbering 800 members, met at the Broad Street church for a small service, which was followed by a congregational procession, two by two, up North Division Street to the newly finished cathedral-sized church. Celebrations continued for an entire week. Since the early 1920s some modifications have been made to the exterior and interior, but the integrity of the original Gothic Revival design has been lovingly maintained through more than seventy-five years of use.

MARYLAND HISTORIC PRESERVATION PLAN INFORMATION

RESOURCE NAME: Bethesda United Methodist Church

MHT INVENTORY NUMBER: WI-424

MARYLAND COMPREHENSIVE PLAN DATA

1. Historic Period Theme(s):
Architecture
Religion

2. Geographic Orientation: Eastern Shore

3. Chronological/Development Period(s): Industrial/Urban Dominance
1870-1930

4. Resource Type(s): Church

MARYLAND INVENTORY OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES

Maryland Historical Trust State Historic Sites Inventory Form

1. Name (indicate preferred name)

historic Bethesda United Methodist Church

and/or common Bethesda Methodist Protestant Church

2. Location

street & number NW corner of North Division and W. Willam Sts. not for publication

city, town Salisbury vicinity of congressional district First

state Maryland county Wicomico

3. Classification

Table with 4 columns: Category, Ownership, Status, Present Use. Includes options like building(s), public/private, occupied/unoccupied, agriculture/commercial, etc.

4. Owner of Property (give names and mailing addresses of all owners)

name Trustees of Bethesda United Methodist Church

street & number 406 North Division Street telephone no.:

city, town Salisbury state and zip code MD 21801

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Wicomico County Clerk of Court liber

street & number Wicomico County Courthouse folio

city, town Salisbury state MD 21801

6. Representation in Existing Historical Surveys

Title

date ___ federal ___ state ___ county ___ local

depository for survey records

city, town state

7. Description

Survey No. WI-424

Condition		Check one	Check one	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site	
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved	date of move _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed			

Prepare both a summary paragraph and a general description of the resource and its various elements as it exists today.

Bethesda United Methodist Church, formerly Bethesda Methodist Protestant Church, is located on the northwest corner of North Division and William streets in the center of the Newtown Historic District in Salisbury, Wicomico County, Maryland. Set on a forty-five degree axis to the intersection, the church faces southeast with the principal gable roof oriented on a southeast/northwest axis.

Built between 1921 and 1923 on an axial plan with a cross transept, the single-story Gothic Revival granite church is supported on a raised foundation with a fully excavated cellar. The Mt. Airy granite walls are combined with limestone trimmings around windows and doors. The main block is covered by a steeply pitched slate roof. Dominating the front of the church is a three-story entrance and bell tower. Wrapping around back northwest end of the chancel is a polygonal wing that houses the Sunday School rooms.

Centered on the three-bay front elevation is the three-story entrance and bell tower. The double-door Gothic arched entrance is reached by a double set of granite steps. Heavy oak doors have carved oak panels filled with colored glass. Above the entrance is a large pointed arch transom filled with colored glass in leaded panes. The entire entrance is framed by a limestone surround featuring carved stone pinnacles on either side of a carved band of stone inscribed "Bethesda Methodist Protestant Church." The lettering is in a Gothic typeface. The second floor of the tower is pierced by a large Gothic arched window trimmed in limestone and filled with colored glass. The entrance is flanked by raised stone corners that define the tower and rise to a third story belfry. The belfry is pierced by tripartite or paired Gothic arch openings on each side, and the top of the wall is finished with a crenelated parapet. The belfry openings are framed in limestone, and the parapet wall is capped with limestone as well. Flanking the entrance and bell tower are large Gothic arched windows filled with colored glass. Fixed in the southeast corner of the foundation is the "1922" date carved in the cornerstone. The gable end of the church is finished with a parapet wall capped in limestone. The outside corners of the church are defined by clasping buttresses. Lighting the cellar are large multi-pane windows of clear glass.

The northeast and southwest side elevation are essentially alike with the transept arm projecting forward in the fourth bay from the front of the church. Each bay is defined by clasping buttresses. Tripartite Gothic arched windows of colored glass fill each sanctuary bay. The transept is defined by clasping buttresses at each corner, and the wall is pierced by four-part Gothic arched sanctuary windows. On the first floor of the southwest side, the transept is pierced by a Gothic arched side entrance filled with carved double oak doors.

The chancel end of the church is surrounded by a two-story rear Sunday School wing built on what was known as the "Akron plan." Rectangular windows trimmed with limestone and filled with clear glass light the first and second floors.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400–1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500–1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600–1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900–	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates 1921–23 **Builder/Architect**

check: Applicable Criteria: A B C D
 and/or
 Applicable Exception: A B C D E F G

Level of Significance: national state local

Prepare both a summary paragraph of significance and a general statement of history and support.

Construction of the Bethesda Methodist Protestant Church was begun in November 1921 with a ground-breaking ceremony.¹ Four months later, in March 1922, a service initiating the laying the cornerstone of the church was witnessed by a standing-room crowd of onlookers. A reporter for *The Wicomico News* stated:

*The stone was lowered to its place. The first trowel of cement was laid by Mr. William Humphrey Rounds, the senior male member of the church and the second was laid by Master Samuel Tilghman Morris, the youngest member, who had united with the church at the morning service.*²

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The Bethesda Methodist congregation, however, did not begin worshipping in such a grand edifice. Founded in 1841, the small congregation of Methodist Protestant followers cobbled together funds to erect a small frame meeting house

¹ Mildred Warner Pope, “A History of Bethesda Methodist Church, 1841-1976,” p. 20.

² *The Wicomico News*, March 23, 1922.

8.1 SIGNIFICANCE

Bethesda United Methodist Church, WI-424
Salisbury, Wicomico County, Maryland

in the Camden neighborhood on a high spot overlooking the Wicomico River.³ The small congregation occupied the Camden chapel for nearly thirty years, until the increase in congregants warranted a larger structure. It was decided to relocate to a site on Broad Street across from the Presbyterian church. Over the course of two years, the Bethesda congregation financed construction of a new frame church. Mention of the construction was included the church periodical, *The Methodist Protestant*. The November 12, 1870 issue stated:

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³ Pope, p. 5.

⁴ Pope, p. 8.

⁵ Pope, p. 24.

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

5860 NW
(HEBRON)

75°37'30"
38°22'30"

447000m E

35'

4246000m N

4245

4244

4243

20'

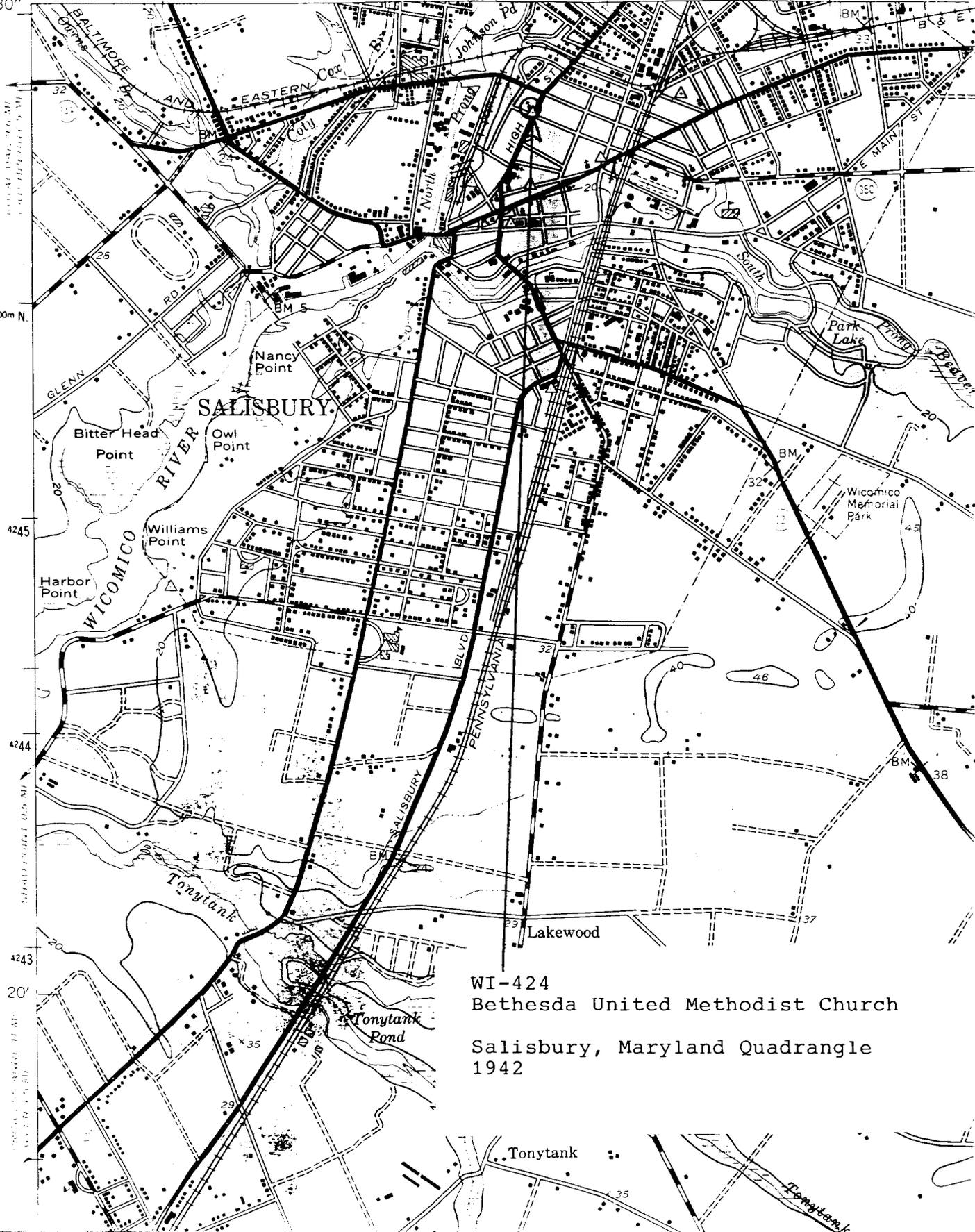
29

35

37

38

39



WI-424
Bethesda United Methodist Church
Salisbury, Maryland Quadrangle
1942

Tonytank

Tonytank

