

ROCKY SPRINGS SCHOOL HOUSE



Rocky Springs School House was built c. 1839 & is listed on the Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties. It is one of the oldest remaining one-room schools in Maryland & still stands at its original location. Constructed of local field-stone & native timber, it served over 90 continuous years as Frederick County Public School No. 26 (1839-1930). From 1839 until 1882, it served simultaneously as a public school & house of worship for the Church of the United Brethren in Christ (U.B.), the first American born denomination which was founded on September 25, 1800, about one mile east of Rocky Springs School House at the home of Frederick Kemp & his son, U.B. Reverend Peter Kemp.

IMPETUS FOR THIS “PIONEER CHURCH-SCHOOL”:



Group of Rocky Springs School House Students about 1926-1928

In 1836, a supplement to the “1825 Act to provide for the Public Instruction of Youth in Primary Schools throughout this State” was passed by the Maryland Legislature that gave the school district trustees in Frederick County, the authority to permit any of the school-houses to be used for public worship. By this time the predecessor of Rocky Springs School House, which was built c. 1790 on land conveyed by Henry Staley & George Shoup to school trustees Peter Kemp & Joseph Staley (on a lot adjacent to the Rocky Springs School House lot) was over 45 years old. Therefore, by deed dated April 15, 1839, U.B. Reverend John Staley & Margaret, his wife, conveyed a parcel of land to school trustees Cornelius Staley (their son), Ezra Doub & Nicholas Whitmore “...so that they shall erect and build, or cause to be erected and built thereon a school house for the use of the Schoolers in School District no. 26 to be called “*Rocky Springs School House*.” In the deed, John & Margaret Staley stipulated that the school be “...laid out by the Board of Inspection, by the Primary School of Frederick County... according to the laws and regulations made by the Legislature of the State of Maryland for the government of primary schools in Frederick County...”

Once Rocky Springs School House was constructed, the U.B. congregation worshipping at Frederick & Peter Kemp’s original homestead where the U.B. Church was founded in 1800 (which after Reverend Peter Kemp’s death in 1811, had passed to his daughter, Esther, & her husband, Valentine Doub), moved its religious services from that historic home to Rocky Springs School House. Here the congregation continued to worship & flourish until the U.B. built Rocky Springs Chapel next door about 1882, on land conveyed to the U.B. by Cornelius Staley & his wife, Rhuanna.

Reverend Commodore. I. B. Brane (1848-1920), co-author of the book, *Landmark History of the United Brethren Church*, published in 1911, attended Rocky Springs School House as a boy in the 1850s/1860s. In the book, Reverend Brane describes the all encompassing role Rocky Springs School House played in his life as follows:



Rocky Springs School House Students Markwood & Linwood Mackenzie & 2 unidentified classmates about 1928

"When the society that worshiped at Valentine Doub's, where the general church was organized in 1800, transferred its services to Rocky Spring School house, it entered upon the occupancy of a stone structure that was built for school and sanctuary purposes... Here the writer worshiped on Sunday and wrestled with "the three R's" during the week, receiving nutriment for head and heart, plus an occasional flogging. Of course, there is a wide difference between temporal and eternal things, but they were strangely mixed...in that stone schoolhouse. The man who inspired my soul on Sunday "tanned my hide" on Monday. The preacher was also the teacher, you see. That strange combination of gospel grace and "physical culture" I well remember... by the way, how I love that old schoolhouse. It recalls those exquisitely bright days of childhood, including the boys and girls with whom I played forty years ago. It is the embodiment of some of the sweetest memories of my life, secular, social and religious. In that old schoolhouse I was converted. Within those walls, one bright Sunday morning, I was formally received into the Church. There I received my first communion. How I long to see my old pastors, and teachers, and schoolmates..."

Rocky Springs School House also played a role in Maryland's Civil War history. On July 8, 1864, about 100 troopers of the 8th Illinois Cavalry (Union) & 400 of the 1st & 2nd Maryland Cavalry (Confederate) skirmished near the school, killing & wounding several men & horses. Documentation of the skirmish including two maps depicting Rocky Springs School House are in the 1898 book, *Early's Great Raid, He Advances Through Maryland, Battle of Monocacy*, by Frederick native & Union 1st Lieutenant Edward. Y. Goldsborough, aid-de-camp to General Erastus B. Tyler, prior to, during & immediately after the Battle of Monocacy. The first map depicting the school house is captioned "Monocacy Battlefield and Vicinity." The second map is captioned "Showing Federal and Rebel Lines of Battle July 8, 1864." In addition, Goldsborough wrote in regard to the action, "Our cavalry skirmished with the rebel cavalry during the day near Rocky Springs School House..."

In 1930, the Frederick County Board of Education sold the school house to the trustees of Rocky Springs Chapel for use as a meeting & community center. In 2015, the trustees of Historic Rocky Springs Chapel, Inc. (HRSC), an all-volunteer nonprofit organization dedicated to preserving historic Rocky Springs School House & Chapel, purchased both properties. A primary goal of HRSC is to rehabilitate & restore the school to its appearance during its first period of existence (1839-1865) and provide for the building's adaptive reuse as a public center for historical interpretation & research regarding the history of the building & the objects, people & events associated with it. Emergency stabilization work to prevent the irretrievable loss of this rare, tangible piece of America's educational & Civil War history (Phase I of the project) will cost \$27,000 & full restoration (Phase II of the project) will cost \$200,000. All work will be performed in accordance with *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties* by preservation contractor Fitzgerald's Heavy Timber Construction of Thurmont, Maryland. If you would like to help HRSC fund this worthwhile project, please send a check or money order with your donation to:



Historic Rocky Springs Chapel, Inc.
7817 Rocky Springs Road
Frederick, MD 21702

Please indicate on the memo portion of your check or money order (or the correspondence you send with your check or money order) that your gift is to be used for the restoration of Rocky Springs School House. HRSC is a tax exempt charitable organization under Internal Revenue Code Section 501 (c)(3), therefore, donations made to HRSC are tax deductible & acknowledged, in writing, by HRSC. For more information call (240) 439-4235 or visit us on Facebook at Historic Rocky Springs Chapel & School House or on our website at www.historicrockyspringschapelschoolhouse.org.