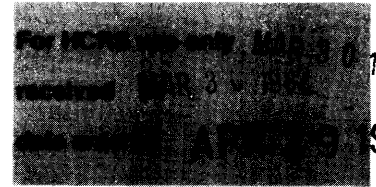


**United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**



1982  
982

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

**1. Name**

historic St. Stephens Episcopal Church

and/or common

**2. Location**

*N of Earleville on MD 282*

street & number Maryland Route 282 \_\_\_ not for publication

city, town Earleville *ms*  vicinity of congressional district First

state Maryland code 24 county Cecil code 015

**3. Classification**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Ownership</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Present Use</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture <input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial <input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational <input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government <input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial <input type="checkbox"/> transportation
	<u>N/A</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military <input type="checkbox"/> other:

**4. Owner of Property**

name St. Stephens Church, Attn: Mr. Preston Leighton

street & number 35 Snug Harbor Way

city, town Earleville  vicinity of state Maryland 21919

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Clerk of the Circuit Court

street & number Cecil County Courthouse

city, town Elkton, state Maryland

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

title Maryland Historical Trust  
Historic Sites Survey has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date 1980  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records Maryland Historical Trust

city, town Annapolis state Maryland

## 7. Description

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

### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

#### DESCRIPTION SUMMARY

The single story rectangular stuccoed brick main block, three bays by one room, rests on a partially excavated fieldstone foundation and is covered by steeply pitched slate roof. Attached to the east gable end is a shorter single story one bay by one room rectangular block which contains the altar. A shed roof extends off the altar room's south side for the sacristy. The west gable end dominates the church structure with its four story bell tower with broach spire and patterned slate roof. The exterior surfaces of the church are uniformly covered with stucco that have been scored to imitate ashlar masonry. The Gothic Revival structure was built in 1870-1874 but incorporated the old walls of the earlier church of 1824 and 1735. A graveyard, which corresponds to the church's long history, surrounds the structure.

#### GENERAL DESCRIPTION

Saint Stephen's Church of North Sassafras Parish stands immediately north of Earleville, Maryland on the east side of Maryland Route 282. Earleville is a centrally located farming community in Cecil County's rural southernmost tidewater lands known as Sassafras Neck. The Gothic Revival church has a western exposure with the main gable on the east/west axis.

The west facade tower is flanked by two lancet windows that are bordered with raised brick surrounds. The sides of the surrounds have a crenelated brick pattern below the Gothic arch. The tower contains the main entrance which is naturally a Gothic arched opening with double doors with applied moldings. Directly above the entrance is a stained glass window that repeats the same Gothic arch and crenelated surround. Two openings exist between the previous window and tower room. These openings are rectangular louvered vents complete with crenelated surrounds. Moving upward, the next story is the bell room which has another Gothic arched opening which is surrounded by a red brick frame with corbelled brick arcade above the opening and a single brick crenelation below the frame. All the previously mentioned surrounds are plain red brick set against the stuccoed surface. The north and south sides of the tower are basically the same but the number of window openings differ. The first and third floors have a singular rectangular opening while the second floor has a larger Gothic arched opening. The fourth story tower room openings are the same as the main facade. The four sides of the steeple base have small triangular shaped ventilators which add to smoothing the transition between the square tower and octagonal steeple. The steeple is topped by a gold cross.

The north and south sides of the main block have three evenly spaced Gothic arched windows with the same crenelated brick surrounds and stained glass windows, which were replaced in 1963.

The east gable end is primarily covered with the altar room. A single flue brick stove stack rises against the northeast corner of the main block. The altar room has a Gothic arched opening on the north and east sides. The east end window is a large tri-partite Gothic window. The south side contains the scristy which has a Gothic arched door opening on its south wall.

# 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 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input 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** 1860-1870      **Builder/Architect** Thomas Dixon, Architect

**Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)**      Applicable Criteria: B, C

SIGNIFICANCE SUMMARY

The significance of St. Stephen's Church of North Sassafras Hundred in southern Cecil County is derived primarily from the architectural character of the structure. As a church remodeled in a highly ornamented but conservative interpretation of the High Victorian style, the building embodies the distinctive features of a period and type of architecture that, although popular in the United States in the 1870s and 1880s was not commonly used in the rural regions of Maryland, particularly those sections of the state which were a substantial distance from an urban center. The important features of St. Stephen's that characterize it are a stuccoed brick structure with exaggerated brick decoration surrounding the openings and delineating the bell tower and an interior dominated by exposed scissored trussing and Gothic arch motifs. The building achieves additional significance from association with Thomas Dixon, a Baltimore architect responsible for the design. St. Stephen's is the only known documented example of Dixon ecclesiastical designs located outside of a major urban center.

HISTORY AND SUPPORT

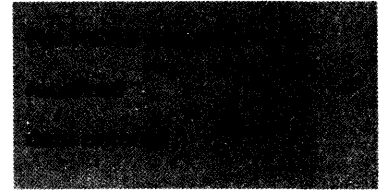
St. Stephen's Church of North Sassafras Hundred was organized in 1692 and represents a continual Episcopal congregation in Cecil County and the religious persuasion of most of the county's earliest residents. North Sassafras was one of the original parishes designated by a Maryland Act of Assembly. The history of the present church building began in the mid 1860s with the discussion of rebuilding and expanding an 1824 structure, which measured 30 x 40, with Thomas Dixon a Baltimore architect. The vestry minutes document the complete renovation of the earlier building.

" . . . the roof and ceiling are to be taken off the present building, all of the doors and windows with their frames are to be taken out, the top part of the present walls are to be taken down to the height shown by the drawings (location unknown), the end wall is to be taken down and the present stairs and fittings removed. The new additions are to be made agreeable to the dimensions shown figured on the drawings . . ."

The new church was consecrated Friday, May 8, 1874 by Henry C. Lay, Bishop of Easton. The 1860-1870 church has incorporated into its walls the 1824 brick building which replaced the second structure that was built around 1735. The first church is recorded as being consecrated on March 25, 1706. The events associated with the church are countless but one of the more prominent occasions was the June 22, 1834 ordination of the Reverend William Douglas, the fifth black to receive Anglican Orders in America and the first to receive them south of the Mason-Dixon line.



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St. Stephens Episcopal Church  
Earleville vicinity  
Cecil County, Maryland

## GENERAL DESCRIPTION (Continued)

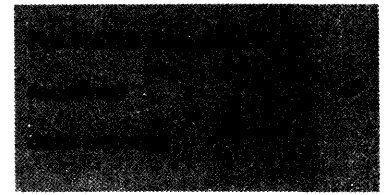
The interior is divided into three sections: the entry, nave, and the altar, which was completely renovated in the 1870 rebuilding of the church. The roof system consists of an exposed scissors truss with a dark walnut stain. The altar roof is treated in the same manner. The front altar space is separated from the main body of the church by a large Gothic arch and open Gothic arch arcaded balustrade. The altar is raised three steps above the main level of the church floor. The main body of the sanctuary contains a central aisle with a solid block of pews butted against the side walls. The third part of the interior consists of the tower entrance and area below the balcony which contains the balcony winder stair in the southwest corner. The balcony is supported by Tuscan columns with a blind arcade across the front wall. The sanctuary furniture dates from the late 19th century renovation and is entirely of Gothic Revival design. Each pew end has a pointed Gothic arch as do most of the pieces.

## BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The nominated 3.4 acres contains the church and surrounding graveyard that is distinguished by a split rail fence, entrance gate, and landscaped yard. The area around the church has several mature oaks and evergreen trees along with a grassy yard which is distinctly separate from the surrounding glebe on the north, east and west sides. The south side is bordered by a road. The acreage was pared down to the immediate area around the church which has been landscaped and is visually separate from the adjacent tilled fields.

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St. Stephens Episcopal Church  
Earleville vicinity  
Cecil County, Maryland

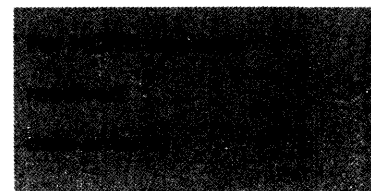
## HISTORY AND SUPPORT (Continued)

Thomas Dixon practiced in Baltimore in the second half of the nineteenth century. For some years he was in partnership with his brother James. The Dixons were responsible for the designs of several buildings in Baltimore, particularly several lavishly decorated Gothic influenced churches. Three more worthy examples of their work are the Mount Vernon Methodist Church located in the Mount Vernon National Historic Landmark District, the Mount Washington Presbyterian Church, and Westminster Church on Lafayette Square. The brothers also designed a number of Victorian houses in Mount Washington.

Throughout rural Maryland, the standard church structure erected in the late nineteenth century was a simple frame or brick building with Gothic decorative detailing. Rarely did these buildings receive such a concerted effort to be as stylish as the St. Stephens structure, particularly for a building of such small scale.

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St. Stephens Episcopal Church  
Earleville vicinity  
Cecil County, Maryland

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

St. Stephen's Vestry Books 1840-1886

Biographical Notes on Dixon on file at Baltimore Commission for Historic and Architectural Preservation, City Hall, Baltimore, Maryland

Maryland Historical Trust Historic Sites Inventory: Cecil County (CE-22.  
Paul Touart, suveyor. 1980.

## VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Beginning at a point at the intersection of old Maryland Route 282 and Glebe Road and running along said Glebe Road in a northeasterly direction for 300' to another intersection of parsonage driveway and Glebe Road and running in a southeasterly direction for another 300' to a point along the back edge of the church yard, thence in a southwesterly direction along the back edge of the church yard for 450' to a point along a common southern boundary line of parcel number 50, thence in a northwesterly direction along said common boundary and intersecting the curve in Route 282 for about 375' to a place of beginning being 3/5 of parcel number 49 as shown on Cecil County Tax Map number 56 and containing approximately 3.4 acres.

