

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

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

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

For HCRS use only

received FEB 8 1982

date entered MAR 15 1982

1. Name

historic

and/or common St. John's Church

2. Location

street & number 7538 Bellona Avenue _____ not for publication

city, town Ruxton _____ vicinity of _____ congressional district Second

state Maryland code 24 county Baltimore code 005

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other: None

4. Owner of Property

Trustees of the Colored Methodist Protestant St. John's Chapel of Baltimore County
name c/o Mrs. Marie Scott Brown and Miss Esther Scott

street & number 6203 Falls Road

city, town Baltimore _____ vicinity of _____ state Maryland 21204

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Baltimore County Courthouse

street & number 401 Bosley Avenue

city, town Towson _____ state Maryland 21204

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Maryland Historical Trust Sites Inventory has this property been determined eligible? _____ yes no

date 1976 -1979 _____ federal state _____ county _____ local

depository for survey records Maryland Historical Trust

city, town Annapolis _____ state Maryland

7. Description

BA-1559

Condition		Check one	Check one
<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

SUMMARY DESCRIPTION

St. John's Church, Ruxton, in Baltimore County is a late nineteenth century frame Gothic Revival gable-roofed structure with board and batten siding, stylized lancet windows, and Queen Anne decorative detailing. The building rests on a rubble stone foundation facing east and bears a cornerstone (southeast corner) inscribed "St. John's A.U.M.P. Church A.D. 1886". The interior has architrave moldings; narrow verticle board wainscoting; turned balusters, newels, and columns at the altar; plastered walls and ceilings; narrow board flooring; and oak pews. The integrity of the church is good. The property is enhanced by a one and a half story stuccoed stone house which is believed to date from about 1835 and used as a parsonage and a turn of the century, possibly 1890s, simple frame rectangular social hall. The parsonage has extensive fire damage to the interior, though the stone walls remain intact, and the social hall is in poor condition but does retain much of its original features.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

The church is a late nineteenth century frame Gothic Revival structure with Queen Anne decorative detailing. The rectangular building, which rests on a rubble stone foundation, measures 35 feet 11 inches by 20 feet 7 inches and has three principal windows on the side or north and south elevations and two principal windows and a central entrance on the east or facade elevation. A cornerstone (southeast corner) is inscribed "St. John's A.U.M.P. Church A.D. 1886". The exterior of the structure is sheathed with board and batten siding with scaled shingling in the gables (east and west elevations). The roof is covered with new fiber shingles and has a low brick chimney protruding along the south side.

The principal windows have louvered shutters and double-hung wooden sashes with four lights and are stylized lancet type on the exterior and rectangular on the interior. The entranceway has paneled double doors beneath a rectangular transom with stained glass lights and a Gothic influenced surround. Circular windows with square and rectangular lights are located in both gable ends. The interior has archtrave moldings on the windows and door; narrow verticle board wainscoting; turned balustered railing, newels, and columns at the altar; plastered walls and ceiling; narrow board flooring; and oak pews.

The building known as the "parsonage" is a one and a half story stuccoed rubble stone structure which is believed to date from about 1835 when the original church on this site was erected. The house, which was extensively damaged by fire in 1981, has a three bay facade or east elevation with a central entrance and consisting of one room up, one room down, and a one story frame wing to the west which was completely destroyed by the fire. The stone walls remain intact but the frame portions (roof and wing) have lost integrity. The frame wing probably dated from about 1900.

Below is a description of the building prepared about 1978 for the Trust by Wayne L. Nield, II:

" The parsonage is a true one-and-one-half story dwelling with a plan of one room up and one down, with a single room added to the rear (or west). Dimensions are 20 feet, 8 inches on the main facade by a depth of 18 feet, 4 inches.

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET #1

8. Significance

BA-1559

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/ humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

Specific dates 1886 (church) **Builder/Architect** George Horn, builder (church)

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph) Applicable Criteria: A and C

SIGNIFICANCE SUMMARY

The St. John's Church, Ruxton, and its accompanying buildings, the "parsonage" and the social hall, are significant for association with black religious and social history in the Bare Hills - Ruxton area of Baltimore County. These buildings were created as a center for the religious and social activities of a black congregation that was formed in the 1830s and who acquired the site in 1883. Around the turn of the century, members of the congregation, which was always small, worked primarily for the affluent white population whose estates and large houses bordered the complex. As a church built in a modest interpretation of the Gothic Revival style with Queen Anne influenced decorative detailing, St. John's Church is a typical example of churches erected in the rural regions of Maryland in the late nineteenth century. These buildings characteristically were small scale frame rectangular structures with sharply pitched gable roofs, board and batten siding, lancet shaped windows, and shingle decoration. The St. John's Church is particularly important in that it remains essentially intact and thus is an indicator of the craftsmanship available in the region.

HISTORY AND SUPPORT

The church history is intimately tied to the Scott family of the Bare Hills neighborhood on the Falls Road a mile or more north of the present Baltimore city line. The church was originally convenient to Falls Road residents but, in 1861, it was rendered somewhat less accessible by the impoundment of Jones Falls and the filling up of Lake Roland.

The Scott family traces its line to a free man, believed to have been part Indian, Tobias Scott of Saint Mary's County. His son, James Aquilla Scott (I) was born in 1784 and settled in Baltimore County, purchasing land on Falls Road from Johnzee Hook in 1839 (2). James Aquilla Scott (I) practiced as a blacksmith and served as a minister. His home at Falls Road and Walnut Avenue appears as "A. Scott" property on Sidney's 1850 county map. (3) The Scotts, Aquilla and his wife, had at least eleven children, including Aquilla Scott (II). (4)

In 1833, Elijah Fishpaw and his wife, Catherine, and also Mary Fishpaw deeded three-quarters of an acre of "The Hopyard" to Benjamin Johnson, Aquilla Scott, Thomas Harvey, Wesley Hayes, Joshua Harvey, " . . . all colored people and descendants from Africa who are nominated trustees for certain purposes hereafter . . . in trust to and for . . . the use of that part of the descendants of Africa which forms and makes the Bethel Episcopal Methodist Religious Society for their use to make a burying ground on for the interment of their dead and for them to erect a meeting house thereon for the purpose of meeting there as often as they may think proper in order to worship Almighty God in spirit and truth . . ." (5)

9. Major Bibliographical References

BA-1559

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET #7

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of nominated property .75 acres

Quadrangle name Cockeysville quad.

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UMT References

A	1 8	3 5 8 2 4 0	4 3 6 1 6 2 0
	Zone	Easting	Northing

B			
	Zone	Easting	Northing

C			
---	--	--	--

D			
---	--	--	--

E			
---	--	--	--

F			
---	--	--	--

G			
---	--	--	--

H			
---	--	--	--

Verbal boundary description and justification

The nominated boundaries are delineated on Continuation Sheet #8

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	N/A	code	county	code
-------	-----	------	--------	------

state		code	county	code
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11. Form Prepared By

name/title	Ronald L. Andrews
	John McGrain

organization	Maryland Historical Trust	date	November 1981
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street & number	21 State Circle	telephone	301-269-2438
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city or town	Annapolis	state	Maryland 21401
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12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature		date	2-5-82
title	STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER	date	

For HCRS use only	
I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register	
	date 3/15/82
Keeper of the National Register	Entered in the National Register
Attest:	date
Chief of Registration	

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GENERAL DESCRIPTION (Continued)

The walls are made of uncoursed brownish fieldstone that has been stuccoed. The stone rises to the apex of the gables. There is also a gable-end roof which has an almost oversized roof dormer. There are no eaves on the ends, and even the sides have an overhang of only 10 to 12 inches. While the dormer appears to be original to the present roof, its six-light casements are not compatible with the four-light casements of the gables. Machine-sawn rafters and cut wire nails suggest that if this building is more than 80 or 90 years old, its roof has been changed.

Each end of the parsonage is windowless except for a small casement window in each gable. That of the north is centralized but the south window is off center to the west. It is interesting to note that these deep casements are presently mounted on the inside bay of the opening. The main facade faces east, as does the church. It is three bays wide: a centrally located door flanked by windows. The south window, however, is not as large as the north and it may be an alteration. The door and north window share the same wooden jack arch and the taller north window has a large fieldstone sill.

The west facade is nearly obliterated by the frame shed-roofed addition. Interior examination suggests that it once had a door on the north side and a single window on the south side of it (which might have been the original appearance of the east facade as well).

The single room downstairs is characterized by the windowless north wall and the presence of the enclosed stairs on the south wall. A flue chimney occupies the center of the west wall and separated the door and window.

The original mouldings of this room are a plain architrave that is not unlike the design seen in some Federal period houses.

It appears that the south window of the east wall was cut through to light the stairs. The enclosure of those stairs is not original and one wonders what relationship there is, if any, between this fact and the off-center gable window at the top. The placement of that window and the protruding beam on the exterior of the south end could be indicative of a fireplace; however, the south side would be an odd place for one.

The second level is characterized by its knee walls and trapezoidal ceiling. The room is divided transversely by a partition. That wall bisects the dormer, which gives each half an east window and a gable window.

Deterioration in this area allows one to see machine-cut laths and parts of the roof construction. The roof consists of vertically sawn timbers cut by machine. Rafters are joined at the top by a ridgeboard and the trusses are nailed to flat false plates, in some instances with wire nails. The upper half of each knee-wall is frame."

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GENERAL DESCRIPTION (Continued)

The social hall is a turn of the century, possibly 1890s, one and a half story frame rectangular structure with a north/south axised gable roof and small shed-roofed one-story extrusions on the gabled ends. The building is covered with brown-toned insule brick siding and rests on a masonry foundation. An interior chimney projects from near the center of the east elevation. The east and west or side elevations have three bays each. The principal windows of the first floor have long rectangular, double-hung wooden sashes with the upper quarter paneled shut.

The interior consists of a combination of large and small rooms which is said not to be the original arrangement. The interior has simple architraves. The building is in a deteriorated condition though appears to retain much of its integrity.

The cemetery lies between and to the west of the church and parsonage. Some gravesites are located under the present driveway. The cemetery was begun in the 1830s and has been in continuous use though on a limited basis. Although some of the markers no longer stand erect, most remain in good condition.

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HISTORY AND SUPPORT Continued

The church appears on the water supply survey map of 1852 and on the 1857 decorative county map by Robert Taylor. (6) The original place of worship was log, and is depicted in a contemporary watercolor by Eliza Hawkins, who marked the drawing with the date 1835. (7)

James Aquilla Scott dropped dead at age 76 on February 22, 1858. His tombstone at his Falls Road home graveyard reads, "Church of AME. Here lies Aquilla Scott the minister who passed away while in prayer in the Church below now joins the Church above." (8)

A stone in the churchyard on Bellona Avenue mentions another early member, reading, "In memory of Harriett Tate, Beloved Mother of St. Johns . . ."

The pulpit was taken over by James Aquilla Scott II, who also doubled as a blacksmith. The second James Aquilla Scott bought a slave wife from a Cuba Road landowner to rescue her from a life of abuse. Her name was Abnar Gough according to her gravestone, although Aquilla Scott's will called her Honora. (9)

The church body was incorporated on May 2, 1860, as St. John's Colored Methodist Protestant Church. (10) In July 1866, Aquilla Phillips and his wife, Priscilla (Scott) Phillips, conveyed the three-to-four acre church property to the trustees of a corporation entitled "The Colored Methodist Protestant St. John's Chapel of Baltimore County". The consideration named was \$800. (11)

The 1866 deed reflects some problem that had beset the congregation. Aquilla Phillips had taken personal title to the same property donated to the trustees of 1833 the year before conveying to the new corporation. Phillips purchased it from a white landowner of the Ruxton area, Lewis J. Roberts, and paid \$800. The deed index failed to show how the trustees lost temporary control of this lot. (12)

The 1876 Tax Ledger described the improvements at "St. John's Methodist P. Church" as:

Tract of Land E. Side of N.C.R.R. near Lake Roland 1 Acre, less church occup.
Improvements - 2 small stone houses. (13)

E. Robinson's 1882 map of the Baltimore region showed three buildings on a small lot near Lake Station on the Northern Central Railroad south of Malvern Avenue. (14)

The original church perished, possibly between 1876 and 1886, because a new structure was established that year, and the county paper announced:

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HISTORY AND SUPPORT (Continued)

The corner-stone for St. John's A.U.M.P. Church, Lake Roland, will be laid by Rev. E. W. Scott on Sunday, August 29, at 3 o'clock p.m., to which all are invited. (15)

The ceremonies were reported in the Sun the following day, and the text sheds some light on the church history:

Corner-stone Laying. The corner-stone of the St. John's A.U.M.P. Church, near Lake Station, Northern Central Railroad, was laid yesterday with appropriate ceremonies. Rev. D. W. Scott, president of the A.U.M.P. Conference, preached an excellent sermon, the service being held in the open air, in the shade of a number of large trees. The contents of the stone were a copy of the Bible, a Methodist hymn book, a copy of the Discipline of the church, also a copy of the SUN of Saturday, a paper on which was written the names of the President of the United States, Governor of Maryland, and a list of judges of the Baltimore County Circuit. The church will be a pretty little frame building, 20 by 35 feet, situated on a hill overlooking Lake Roland, about a quarter of a mile above Lake Station. The corner-stone is situated in the south-east corner of the church. A number of members of the colored lodge of the order of the Seven Wise Men of Melvale, were in attendance. Mr. George Horn, of Towsontown, is the builder. (16)

The papers also show that the Rev. E. W. Scott, a member of the founding family, preached the same evening at a camp meeting held at Paradise Grove on Merryman's Lane (somewhere near present University Parkway). Other newspaper mentions show that Edwin Scott (1841-1891) was the pastor of Towson's black church, St. James A.U.M.P. (17)

The new church was of tasteful design, its windows trimmed in stained glass, its outer walls in the purposely picturesque board and batten format. The contractor is listed in State directories as a carpenter in Towson in 1878 and 1887, the last name spelled both Horn and Horne. (18)

The second James Aquilla Scott lived until 1892. The church was affiliated with the A.M.E. denomination but three generations of Scotts held the title as trustees. In the 1950s, the parish started to decline due to changes in transportation patterns, the development of other churches, and the disappearance of live-in help in the large suburban houses of Ruxton. The local church structure tried to persuade the family to surrender the church to the conference, but the Scotts declined. Eventually, the congregation could no longer support a minister and, after carrying on with occasional services, the doors were closed.

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HISTORY AND SUPPORT (Continued)

The Scott family found themselves forced to pay residential taxes in spite of the fact that the entire premises is either church or cemetery property. To propound the problem, the State Department of Assessment and Taxation charged them with two acres of land and also failed to mark the site on the tax map and, in addition to that, indexed the account to the wrong tax map and (the one containing Lutherville), and also listed the address as the Falls Road. (19)

In 1980-1981, with the help of the Ruxton-Riderwood-Lake Roland Improvement Association, the family was relieved of the tax burden and assured of a three-year refund. In early 1981, a number of newspaper articles in a neighborhood publication recounted the struggles of the trustees to maintain the chapel, and a scout group agreed to help weed the cemetery, and the Baltimore County Landmarks Preservation Commission agreed to consider the site for the Preliminary Landmarks List.

Shortly after receiving the limited local publicity in the Roland Park-based publication, The Messenger, a suspicious fire took place in the parsonage on the afternoon of March 23, 1981, burning some relatively late partitions and carpenter work in the attic.

NOTES:

1. Gail O'Donovan, "Notes, St. John's Methodist Episcopal Church, and the Scott Family", Ruxton, Md., Typescript, March 20, 1981.
2. Baltimore City Deeds, TK 232:222.
3. J. C. Sidney and P. J. Browne, "Map of the City and County of Baltimore, Maryland, from Original Surveys", James M. Stephens, Publisher, Baltimore, 1850.
4. O'Donovan, Notes, 1981.
5. Baltimore City Deeds, TK 293:___ (October 29, 1839).
6. Robert Taylor, "Map of the City and County of Baltimore from Actual Surveys", Baltimore, 1857. Thomas P. Chiffelle, "Map of the City of Baltimore and Part of Baltimore County, including the Valley of the Great Gunpowder River . . .", A. Hoen, Baltimore, 1852.
7. Original artwork in possession of Mrs. Marie Brown, 6203 Falls Road, Bare Hills.
8. O'Donovan, "Notes".
9. Baltimore County Wills, JEB 14:89.

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NOTES: (Continued)

10. Baltimore County Incorporation Records, Index, Liber JB 1, Index Page "S".
The full text was copied into the Baltimore County Chatel Records, Liber 4:175, a series that has been moved to the Hall of Records, Annapolis.
11. Baltimore County Deeds, GHL 51:134.
12. B.C. Deeds, JHL 47:57.
13. Baltimore County Tax Ledger, District 9, 1876, n.p. No stone houses are to be found in the John Fishpaw Jr. listing for "The Hopyard" in the 1798 tax list.
14. E. Robinson, "Map of the City of Baltimore and Vicinity", New York, 1882.
15. Baltimore County Union, August 21, 1886.
16. Baltimore Sun, August 30, 1886, p.4, col. 5.
17. American, August 30, 1886, p. 4. Baltimore County Union, November 27, 1886.
18. John R. Bland, Ed., The Maryland Directory and State Gazetteer, 1887. The Baltimore Publishing Company: Baltimore, 1887, p. 121. Also, 1878, p. 544.
19. O'Donovan, "Notes", 1981.

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MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Baltimore County Land and Will Records, Courthouse, Towson, Maryland

Maryland Historical Trust Historic Sites Inventory: Baltimore County (BA-1559, BA-1771, and BA-1772). John McGrain and Wayne Nield, II, surveyors.

O'Donovan, Gail. Notes on file at the Maryland Historical Trust, Annapolis, Maryland

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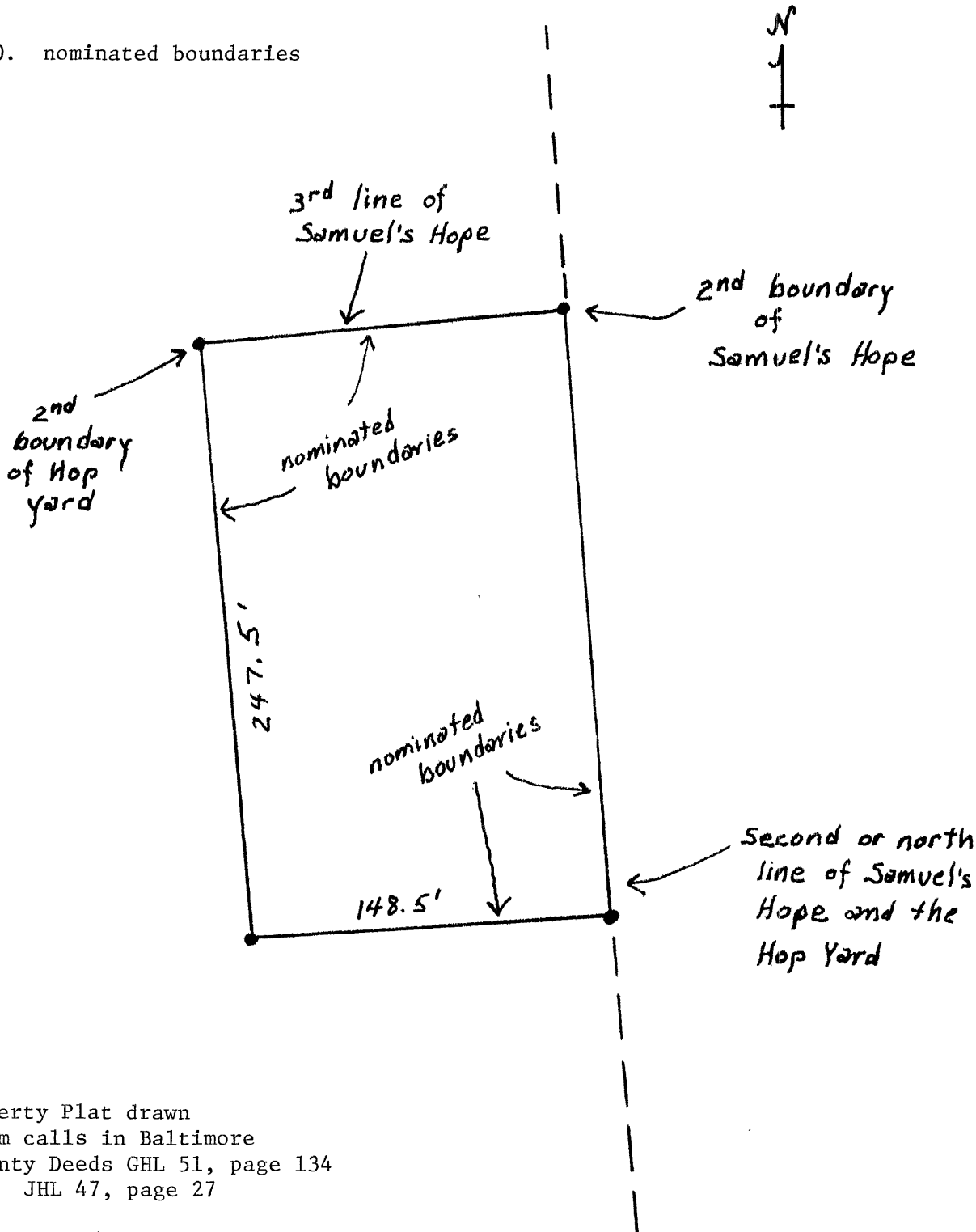
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Section 10. nominated boundaries



Property Plat drawn
from calls in Baltimore
County Deeds GHL 51, page 134
and JHL 47, page 27

not to scale