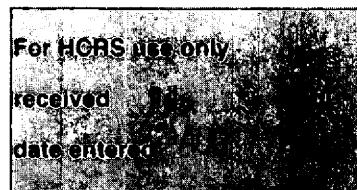


**United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

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



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

**1. Name**

historic Coventry Parish Ruins

and/or common

**2. Location**

street & number MD 667 N/A not for publication

city, town Rehobeth vic.  vicinity of congressional district First

state Maryland code 24 county Somerset code 039

**3. Classification**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Ownership</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Present Use</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" 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"/> not applicable	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other: ruin; vacant

**4. Owner of Property**

name Vestry of Coventry Parish c/o Reverend Percy Reese

street & number St. Paul's Episcopal Church telephone no.: (home) 968-0400

city, town Marion vicinity of state Maryland 21858

**5. Location of Legal Description**

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

street & number Somerset County Courthouse

city, town Princess Anne state Maryland 21853

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

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

date 1967  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records Maryland Historical Trust, 21 State Circle

city, town Annapolis state Maryland 21401

# 7. Description

Survey No. S-70

<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 type="checkbox"/> good	<input checked="" 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

Number of Resources		Number of previously listed National Register properties included in the nomination: <u>0</u>
Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> buildings	Original and historic functions and uses: religious
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> sites	
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> structures	
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> objects	
<u>2</u>	<u>0</u> Total	

### DESCRIPTION SUMMARY

#### Coventry Parish Ruins

The Coventry Parish Ruins are the remnants of a two-story seven-bay by three-bay Flemish bond brick church erected between 1785 and 1788 near the Pocomoke River in the small village of Rehobeth, which is located in southern Somerset County, Maryland. The reddish-brown walls are accented by ten gauged brick jack arches which survive in place on the first floor. In addition, the structure survives with a three-row belt course and portions of the window and door frames. The site of the earlier parish church is located directly behind the ruin and is marked by four concrete piers. A cemetery extends around the east and south sides of the churchyard.

# 8. Significance

Survey No. S-70

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 checked="" 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 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** 1785-1788 **Builder/Architect** Isaac and Stephen Marshall, builders

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Applicable Criteria: A, C  
 Applicable Exceptions: A  
 Level of Significance for Evaluation: local

### SIGNIFICANCE SUMMARY:

Coventry Parish Ruins

The Coventry Parish Ruins are significant for their architecture, and for their association with the history of the Episcopal Church on Maryland's rural Lower Eastern Shore in the period immediately following the Revolution. At the time of its construction (1785-88), this church was the largest of its denomination on Maryland's Eastern Shore; not only its great size (76' x 50'), but also its sophisticated detailing, reflect the prominence of the Episcopal Church among the wealthy planters of Somerset County. It is especially noteworthy that this substantial house of worship was constructed in the midst of perhaps the bleakest period in the history of the Episcopal Church in Maryland: following the Revolution, many Episcopalians left the Church because of its association with England; membership declined sharply, and many Eastern Shore parish churches were abandoned. The size and refinement of the Coventry Parish church suggest an unmatched vitality and loyalty within its original congregation. Despite its ruinous condition, the structure retains sufficient integrity to evoke this association: the three standing walls clearly convey its massing, and the refinement of its Flemish bond brickwork - including such features as a stepped water table, belt course, and ten surviving jack arches of orange gauged brick - remains clearly evident.

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

Survey No. S-70

See Continuation Sheet No 10.

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property 1 acre

Quadrangle name Kingston, Maryland

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

### UMT References

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

B			
	Zone	Easting	Northing

C			
	Zone	Easting	Northing

D			
	Zone	Easting	Northing

E			
	Zone	Easting	Northing

F			
	Zone	Easting	Northing

G			
	Zone	Easting	Northing

H			
	Zone	Easting	Northing

### Verbal boundary description and justification

See Continuation Sheet No 10.

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

state	code	county	code
N/A			

state	code	county	code

# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Paul B. Touart, Architectural Historian

organization Somerset Co. Historical Trust

date 1/23/84

street & number 424 North Somerset Avenue

telephone (home) 651-1094

city or town Princess Anne

state Maryland 21853

# 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

7-5-84

title

date

For HCRS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

*for*

Entered in the  
National Register

date

8/9/84

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

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

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received

date entered

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Continuation sheet Coventry Parish Ruins  
Somerset County, MD

Item number 7

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GENERAL DESCRIPTION

The Coventry Parish Ruins are located in the small village of Rehobeth, Maryland, which is situated on the west bank of the Pocomoke River. Maryland Route 667 passes due north of Rehobeth and connects US 13 and MD 413 at Marion. The two-story brick ruin faces north and is accompanied by a few aging sycamore trees, a cemetery and the site of the earlier Episcopal church.

The remains of this ca. 1785 seven-bay by three-bay Flemish bond structure measures 76 feet across by 50 feet deep. The ruin has been reduced to three primary walls since the south wall rises only a foot above ground level, except for one single story pier. Transomed entrances were located in the outer bays of the three-bay west elevation, and in the central bay of the north facade; the remaining bays held windows.

Despite its ruinous state for nearly a century, most of the first floor walls and some of the second floor walls remain, and exemplify the best traditions of 18th-century brick masonry. A stepped water table defines the base of the large rectangle, and a three-row belt course stretches between the first and second floors. Perhaps the most dramatic features of this ruin, aside from its sheer size, are the ten intact brick arches of the north and west walls. Each window or door opening has an orange-colored jack arch of gauged brick laid with a very fine mortar joint. These ten arches contrast with the reddish-brown Flemish bond walls. Each opening also has the remnants of the 18th-century window or door frames. The center window frame on the west wall is complete. Parts of wrought iron H-hinges and one keeper for the front door-bar survive on various door frames. In 1928, Cassius M. Dashiell from nearby Princess Anne funded the first stabilization efforts, which included laying a concrete floor and capping the brick walls. Iron tie rods were also implanted in the walls to help the stabilization. Against the east interior wall a brick altar was erected with a concrete cross. Along with stabilizing the 1785-1788 structure, the corners of the earlier parish church were located and identified by four concrete piers.

The cemetery with above-ground markers is located to the east. One group of markers is surrounded by an elaborate cast iron fence.

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HISTORY AND SUPPORT

In June of 1692, by an act of the first assembly under Governor Lionel Copley, the Church of England became Maryland's official church.<sup>1</sup> As a result, parishes were laid out in several counties of the province, vestries were elected and ministers were commissioned. In addition, for the support and use of The Church, a tax of forty pounds of tobacco was levied on every tithable person regardless of religious denomination.<sup>2</sup>

Somerset County, then comprising the entire lower Eastern Shore of Maryland, was divided into four parishes; namely Somerset, Coventry, Stepney and Snow Hill. These early parish churches were first located on navigable waterways with convenient access for their parishioners. Coventry Parish church was situated in the early town of Rehoboth (now spelled Rehobeth) on the Pocomoke River. The site of the initial building is located directly behind the ruinous walls of its replacement. From all indications, the first church was a single story brick structure measuring 28'2" by 59', erected in the late 17th or early 18th century.<sup>3</sup> The parcel of ground on which the church was built was not conveyed officially until 1735 when Robert Jenkins Henry sold to Reverend James Robertson, John Dennis, Jr., Thomas Dixon, Thomas Hayward, Thomas Williams, William Lane, and Isaac Williams, vestrymen in and for the Parish of Coventry,

...a certain part of parcell of land in Rehoboth Town in the Parish, County and Province aforesaid on which the Parish Church now standeth and next adjoining...containing and now laid out for two acres more or less...<sup>4</sup>

The fact that the first church was brick instead of frame is suggested by the entry in the vestry minutes of January 7, 1683,

Ordered by the vestry that Thomas Bruff and Littleton Dennis call on those who have had bricks from the Old Church to pay 15 p. per hundred for them and to agree with Littleton Long to plant trees in the church yard under their direction and to put blocks at the church doors...<sup>5</sup>

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Somerset County, MD      Item number      8      Page      3

HISTORY AND SUPPORT

Then years prior to this decision to dismantle the old church, it was ordered and approved by the vestry to build a new church at Rehoboth. On Easter Monday, March 28, 1785, Isaac and Stephen Marshall were bound and obligated to build

A Brick House seventy-two feet long and forty-six feet wide from inside to inside, with a wall of Twenty feet in height--beside a sufficient foundation in the ground with a wall as high as the Water Table of twenty-seven inches thick with a rest of three inches in the inside for the sleepers...<sup>6</sup>

Motions for completing additional work on the new church were entered from 1785 until mid-year 1788. Evidently, the church was completed shortly afterwards but not consecrated until July 17, 1803 by Bishop Clagett.<sup>7</sup>

The period immediately following the Revolution was an extremely difficult time in the history of the Episcopal Church in Maryland. The Church's English associations rendered it unpopular, and membership declined precipitously. Many church buildings, lacking regular use or maintenance, began to deteriorate; a survey of Eastern Shore parishes carried out in 1820 by Reverend Purnell H. Smith at the request of the Bishop of the Diocese found many churches in ruinous condition. Despite the urgings of Bishop Kemp, the reorganization of congregations and reconstruction of church buildings did not become general on the Eastern Shore until the early 1840s. In light of the general decline of the Church following the Revolution, it is interesting that the parishioners of Coventry would undertake the construction in 1785 of such a substantial and refined house of worship.

The Rehoboth Church remained in use until the late 19th century when the Episcopal congregations again dwindled in size and Coventry Parish no longer required the large rural brick church. It was decided to abandon the structure and join congregations with the Chapel of Ease of St. Paul's at Marion, presently the governing body of Coventry Parish. As a result of stabilization efforts initiated by Cassius M. Dashiell of Princess Anne, dedication services were held on September 23, 1928 to commemorate the ruinous edifice.

See Continuation Sheet 4

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HISTORY AND SUPPORTFOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Torrence, Clayton Old Somerset on the Eastern Shore of Maryland, Regional Publishing Co., 1979, p. 144.

<sup>2</sup>Torrence, Clayton p. 144.

<sup>3</sup>Torrence, Clayton p. 175.

<sup>4</sup>Somerset County Land Records, AZ 018/233, 6/18/1735.

<sup>5</sup>Vestry Meetings and Parish Records (1772-1821), January 7, 1793, Original volumes in hands of St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Marion, Md.

<sup>6</sup>Vestry Meetings and Parish Records (1772-1821), March 28, 1785.

<sup>7</sup>Torrence, Clayton, p. 178.

See Continuation Sheet 5



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- Torrence, Clayton, Old Somerset on the Eastern Shore of Maryland.  
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Hands of St. Paul's Episcopal Church near Marion.

See Continuation Sheet 6

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Coventry Parish Ruins

Continuation sheet

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date entered

AUG 9

BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Beginning at a point along the county road which passes in front of the Coventry Parish Ruins and thence in a southerly direction by and with a dirt lane of the James Harrison property for 260' to a point along the said lane and thence due west for 300' behind the aforesaid ruins to a point in the churchyard, thence in a northerly direction 260' to another point in said churchyard, thence due east for 300' to the south edge of the county road and running with said road to place of beginning, containing one acre more or less. See attached plat.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The nominated property, one acre, encompasses the resource within its immediate setting. This landscaped churchyard is regularly maintained, and is distinct in character from the open farmland which surrounds it on all sides.

Farmers Home Administration  
315/502 340/849  
65 74A 89.738  
P 5

273/298  
47 6 A

J LOWELL  
STOLTZFUS  
317/688  
52 50A  
P.105

P.106 P 28 P 36

P 25  
P 110  
ORCHARD

TERRACE 01255

P 26

P 32  
REHOBOTH PRES.  
CHURCH  
212/370  
19.7A

COVENTRY PARISH  
RUINS

P 31

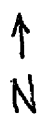
JAMES M  
HARRISON  
310/215  
27 00A  
P 44

NATIONAL REGISTER  
BOUNDARY

REHOBETH

ANITA W MAHAR  
2015/650  
15.12A  
P 47

SCALE: 1" = 600'  
JANUARY 1984



200/120  
56 00A  
P 10

P 01