

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service



National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Abraham Hall

other names PG:62-7

2. Location

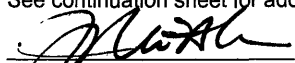
street & number 7612 Old Muirkirk Road not for publication

city or town Beltsville vicinity

state Maryland code MD county Prince George's code 033 zip code 20705

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments).


Signature of certifying official/Title

2-1-05
Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments).

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

- I hereby certify that this property is:
- entered in the National Register.
 - See continuation sheet.
 - determined eligible for the National Register.
 - See continuation sheet.
 - Determined not eligible for the National Register.
 - removed from the National Register.
 - other (explain): _____

Signature of the Keeper Patrick Andrews Date of Action 3/14/2005

Abraham Hall (PG:62-7)
Name of Property

Prince George's County, Maryland
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal
- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	0	Total

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

African American Historic Resources in Prince George's County, Maryland

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

SOCIAL: meeting hall

EDUCATION: school

RELIGION: religious facility

RECREATION AND CULTURE: music facility
theater

COMMERCE/TRADE: business

SOCIAL: meeting hall

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

No style

foundation BRICK

walls WOOD: weatherboard

roof ASPHALT

other

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- Criteria A, B, C, D with checkboxes and descriptions.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply)

Property is:

- Criteria A, B, C, D, E, F, G with checkboxes and descriptions.

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets)

Previous documentation on files (NPS):

- Documentation checkboxes for NPS files.

Area of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

ETHNIC HISTORY: African American
SOCIAL HISTORY
ENTERTAINMENT/RECREATION
ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1889-1964

Significant Dates

1889: Abraham Hall constructed
1963: social use declined

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

African American

Architect/Builder

John W. Jackson (builder)

Abraham Hall (PG:62-7)
Name of Property

Prince George's County, Maryland
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10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 3.85 acres

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

1	1 8 Zone	3 3 7 9 2 0 Easting	4 3 2 5 0 3 2 Northing	3			
2				4			

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Betty Bird, Julie Darsie

Organization Betty Bird & Associates date August 2003

street & number 2607 24th St. NW, Suite 3 telephone (202) 588-9033

city or town Washington, District of Columbia state N/A zip code 20008

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional Items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO)

name Abraham Sons & Daughters c/o William Jones

street & number 6155 Odell Road telephone (301) 937-5040

city or town Beltsville state Maryland zip code 20705-4102

Paperwork Reduction Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et. seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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Abraham Hall

Name of Property

Prince George's County

County and State

DESCRIPTION SUMMARY:

Abraham Hall, constructed in 1889, is a 3-bay, 2-story, wood-frame, front-gable lodge with a small, 1-story, front-gable addition on its west corner and a substantial 1-story, gable-roof addition on its northeast side. Abraham Hall stands on the northeast side of Old Muirkirk Road in the Beltsville vicinity of Prince George's County. The building occupies a grassy lot with mature trees and is surrounded by wooded areas and scattered houses.

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Abraham Hall

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GENERAL DESCRIPTION:

Abraham Hall, constructed in 1889, stands on the northeast side of Old Muirkirk Road in the Beltsville vicinity of Prince George's County, Maryland. Abraham Hall is located at the center of the historic African American community of Rossville. Its secluded setting consists of woodlands to the southwest and northeast and scattered houses to the northwest and southeast. Abraham Hall is set back from Old Muirkirk Road on a 3.85-acre grassy lot with mature trees.

Abraham Hall is a 3-bay, 2-story, wood-frame, front-gable lodge. It has a brick foundation, wood lap siding with cornerboards, and a shake roof with a boxed cornice. A brick chimney rises from the northwest slope of the roof. The main entry is located in the center of the front (southwest) elevation and consists of 5-panel double doors with a drip cap. The 2/2 wood windows have plain surrounds with drip caps, louvered shutters, and cast iron shutter dogs. On the west corner of the building is a 1-story, 1-bay, front-gable restroom addition with a single window on its northwest side. On the northeast side (rear) of the building is a 1-story, gable-roof addition with a concrete foundation and standing-seam metal roof.

The interior of Abraham Hall consists of single large rooms on the first and second floors. The first floor has a wood floor, wide beadboard wainscoting, and drywall upper walls and ceiling with exposed chamfered beams. The window surrounds are molded with bull's-eye corner blocks. The baseboard is simple and recent, and there is no crown molding. A low, shallow stage occupies the northeast addition to the building. An original staircase with a closet beneath occupies the south corner. A recent kitchen has been partitioned off along the northwest wall, and a recent restroom occupies the addition on the west corner. The second floor has the same finishes as the first floor and a wood and glass display cabinet built into the west corner.

Abraham Hall retains its integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship and feeling. The building retains its location, setting, and design in its relationship to Old Muirkirk Road and the houses in Rossville. Despite nearby suburban development, it retains a rural, secluded feeling. Both the interior and exterior were carefully restored between 1986 and 1991 using original materials or in-kind replacements.

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Abraham Hall

Name of Property

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SUMMARY STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE:

Abraham Hall, constructed in 1889, is significant for its association with the themes "The end of Reconstruction in Prince George's County, 1872-1896," "*Plessy vs. Ferguson* and the institution of government-sanctioned segregation in Prince George's County, 1896-1913," and "Suburban settlement in Prince George's County: The African American experience, 1896-1964." These themes are set forth in the Multiple Property Documentation for African American Historic Resources in Prince George's County, Maryland. Abraham Hall was constructed by the Benevolent Sons and Daughters of Abraham, an African American society that was established for the social welfare of its members. Originally known as Rebecca Lodge #6 of the Benevolent Sons and Daughters of Abraham, the building was constructed in 1889 in the burgeoning community of Rossville. Abraham Hall, an excellent example of a multi-purpose building associated with African Americans, served as a meeting hall, a house of worship, a school, and a social hall for African Americans living in a segregated society.

The period of significance for Abraham Hall begins in 1889 with its construction and ends in 1964, the end date of the associated theme, "Suburban settlement in Prince George's County: The African American experience, 1896-1964."

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RESOURCE HISTORY AND HISTORIC CONTEXT:

Abraham Hall was constructed in 1889 in Rossville, a community of freedmen, most of whom worked at the nearby Muirkirk Iron Furnace. Abraham Hall was constructed on one of twelve lots in Rossville that were surveyed in 1886 and purchased by African Americans.¹ An article in the *Laurel Advertiser* in 1889 stated:

A portion of the old Duvall estate . . . has recently been subdivided and sold . . . to certain colored people residing in the vicinity of Muirkirk. The land is of excellent quality and the site very pleasant for residences. The Sons and Daughters of Abraham have purchased about five acres of land and have now about completed a very substantial two-story frame building, with ante-room and closets, to be used as a hall in which to hold the meetings of the society.²

The same article noted that "Contractor and Builder" John W. Jackson had "two buildings under way (*sic*) at Rossville." Jackson was probably the builder of Abraham Hall.

At the time Abraham Hall was constructed, there were no public social services for African Americans, and freedmen were struggling to establish homes and livelihoods. African American churches and societies provided community and support networks to a people excluded from white institutions. Abraham Hall was originally titled Rebecca Lodge #6 of the Benevolent Sons and Daughters of Abraham. Like other African American benefit societies, the Benevolent Sons and Daughters was a combination social service and insurance organization that provided emergency financial assistance, death benefits, and other services to its members. The Rebecca Lodge had been chartered in 1877 and included members of Queen's Chapel, also located in Rossville. Abraham Hall and Queen's Chapel remained closely associated for many years.³

Abraham Hall provided a safe place of assembly for African Americans barred from much of the world by segregation and white hostility. Like most African American lodges, churches and schools, Abraham Hall housed a number of functions. Over the years, it served as a lodge for the Benevolent Sons and Daughters of Abraham and also at times for the Grand United Order of Odd Fellows.⁴ After the original Queen's Chapel burned in 1899, Abraham Hall served as a

¹ Susan G. Pearl, Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties form for Abraham Hall.

² *The Advertiser*, October 2, 1889. Quoted in Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties form for Abraham Hall.

³ Susan G. Pearl, Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties form for Abraham Hall.

⁴ The Odd Fellows was the most popular secret society among African Americans. Its African American membership grew exponentially from the end of the Civil War through the early 20th century. Augustus Meier, *Negro Thought in America*, 137.

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house of worship until the new church opened in 1901. Abraham Hall also served as a school from ca. 1890 until Muirkirk School opened ca. 1922. During the mid-20th century, the building was the site of concerts, dances, and movies.⁵

Although social activities diminished during the 1960s, Abraham Hall remained in use as a lodge until the mid-1970s. The building was restored in 1986 and rededicated in 1991.⁶ The first floor is still occasionally used for social gatherings. The second floor currently houses the Anacostia Trails Heritage Area office.

⁵ Susan G. Pearl, Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties form for Abraham Hall; Historic Abraham Hall (pamphlet).

⁶ Historic Abraham Hall (pamphlet).

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MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES:

- Historic Abraham Hall. Photocopy of pamphlet. [Prince George's County Planning Department]
- Meier, August. *Negro Thought in American, 1880-1915: Racial Ideologies in the Age of Booker T. Washington*. Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 1968.
- Pearl, Susan G. Abraham Hall, Beltsville, Maryland. Maryland Inventory of History Properties Form. Maryland Historical Trust. 1986.
- *African-American Heritage Survey, 1996*. Upper Marlboro, MD: Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission, 1996

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VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION:

The National Register boundary for Abraham Hall is identical to that for Prince George's County Tax Map 14, Lot 81. The boundary encompasses 3.85 acres.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION:

The National Register boundary comprises the original lot on which Abraham Hall was constructed.