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- Adopt-a-Pew (\$250)
 - with a brass name plate (\$500)
- Adopt-the-Cornerstone (\$1,000)
- Any amount is gratefully accepted: \$ _____

Mail to Friends of Tolson's Chapel
P. O. Box 162, Sharpsburg MD 21782

Donate through PayPal online at
www.tolsonschapel.org

FUNDING

The following organizations have
generously contributed to the
preservation of Tolson's Chapel.
Thank you!

Maryland Historical Trust
Preservation Maryland
National Park Service
Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area
National Trust for Historic Preservation
Historic American Buildings Survey, NPS
Hagerstown-Washington County Convention
& Visitors Bureau
The Community Foundation
of Washington County
Mary K. Bowman Fund (CFWC)



Questions, comments, suggestions
or information for us? Contact us!

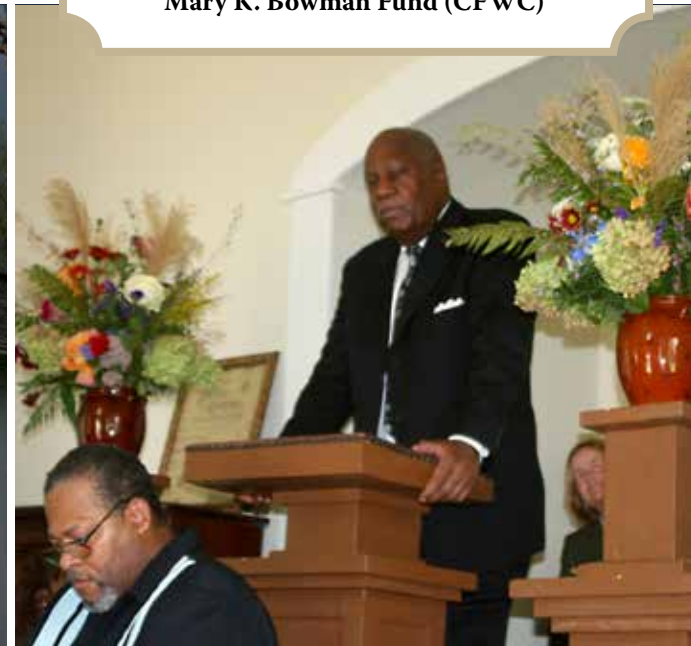
Friends of Tolson's Chapel

P. O. Box 162
Sharpsburg, MD 21782
tolsons.chapel@gmail.com

Open for tours by appointment or
on special weekends. Email us for
more information.

A SIGNIFICANT PLACE
IN AMERICAN HISTORY

*Tolson's
Chapel*



Want to know more about Tolson's
Chapel history & current activities?

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Friends of Tolson's Chapel

Tolson's Chapel

In 1866, African-Americans living in and around Sharpsburg laid the cornerstone of a new, free community. Many had been freed from slavery just two years earlier by a new Maryland Constitution. The log chapel on a back street in Sharpsburg became the spiritual and educational center of a vibrant community of African-American families, and a symbol of freedom.



The chapel was dedicated in October 1867 as part of the Methodist denomination, and later named for Rev. John R. Tolson, the first minister.

Tolson's Chapel served the community for 132 years, holding services, fairs, festivals and bush meetings. In 1998, with no congregation left in Sharpsburg, the building was deconsecrated. With the Bible still open on the pulpit, the door was locked.



The Freedmen's Bureau

The federal Freedmen's Bureau helped local communities throughout the South and the Border States hire teachers and build schools.

In April of 1868, teacher Ezra Johnson, provided by the Freedmen's Bureau, opened the "American Union" school in Tolson's Chapel with eighteen students, twelve of whom were enslaved before the war. "Liquid slate" blackboards, a painted mixture of lamp black and shellac, remain on the chapel walls from its use as a school.

By 1874, the county took responsibility for African-American schools. The Sharpsburg Colored School held classes in Tolson's Chapel until 1899, when a frame schoolhouse was built nearby.



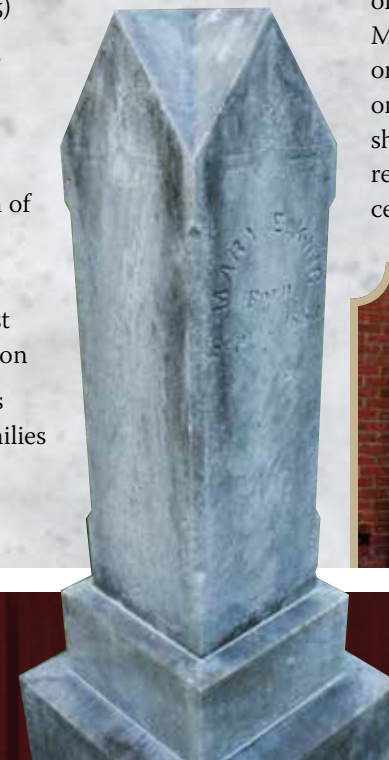
The Cemetery

Officially established in 1883, the cemetery may include unmarked graves from as early as 1871. The earliest stone is that of "Mehaley Thomas, age 100[years]," whose death was reported in the Antietam Wavelet, September 29, 1888. Other stones include:



- ◆ Wilson Middleton, 115th Reg., Co. F, USCI (U.S. Colored Infantry), died 1891
- ◆ First trustee David B. Simons died in 1908 and his son James F. Simons died in 1911
- ◆ Hilary Watson (1917), former slave on the Otto Farm, and his wife Christina (1915)
- ◆ Jeremiah Summers (1925), former slave on the Piper Farm, and his wife Susan (Keets), died 1942
- ◆ Clarence Monroe, veteran of WWI, died 1977
- ◆ Virginia Cook, died 1996, has no marker, was the last member of the congregation

The cemetery list of 56 stones represents about 12 to 15 families with many inter-marriages.



Preservation

In 2002, The Save Historic Antietam Foundation (SHAFF) acquired Tolson's Chapel from the local United Methodist conference. The Friends of Tolson's Chapel (FOTC) formed a 501(c)(3) non-profit association in 2006 and received the property in 2008, with a mission to preserve, restore, and interpret the significant history of Tolson's Chapel. The Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) documented the chapel in 2004. It was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2008. With grants from the Maryland Historical Trust and several preservation organizations, major restoration work was completed on the log structure, board & batten siding, wood shingle roof, and interior plaster. The cupola was reconstructed. In 2013, all of the stones in the cemetery were cleaned, repaired, and reset.

