

**Baltimore City
Commission for Historical and
Architectural Preservation**

**Landmark Designation Report
August 13, 2013**



Canton Methodist Episcopal Church

1000 S. Ellwood Ave
Baltimore, Maryland

Significance Summary

Founded in 1847, the Canton Methodist Episcopal Church was the first church established in Canton. The Canton Company donated land for the congregation's first and second church buildings, because the company strongly encouraged the establishment of religious institutions in their company town. This church was important in the lives of the company's employees, and the civic and social health of the community. The Gothic Revival style building is the congregation's second church building, designed by renowned Baltimore architect Charles L. Carson and built by prominent Baltimore builder Benjamin F. Bennett in 1883/1884. The church was named the Canton Methodist Episcopal Church, and by the late 20th century, it was known as the Canton United Methodist Church. This property is eligible for designation for its role in the history of Canton, and for its architecture.

Background

This property is located at the southeast corner of S. Ellwood and Dillon Avenues in the Canton neighborhood of Baltimore City. From the late 18th to the late 19th century, the Canton Company owned thousands of acres in this area that is now part of Baltimore City. By the 1870s, Canton had grown into a city in its own right, and was "a prime example of paternal industry... They gave land for churches and built recreation halls. Stable residential patterns in Canton and Highlandtown proved how attached people had grown to their work and community....Locals consisted heavily of foreign-born in 1880, and they placed a high value on family and church."¹

The Canton Methodist Episcopal Church was first church established in Canton, founded in 1847. The church was organized by Rev. Edward E. Allen, who was stationed at the Sailor's Bethel (also referred to as Seamen's Bethel).² The first sermon was said to have been preached in a grove on the banks of the Patapsco River.³ Later that year, a chapel was built on Clinton Street between Boston and Toone Street on land donated by the Canton Company.⁴ For the first two decades, the church was a mission served by a rotation of ministers. By 1866, the church gained a full-time pastor.⁵

The congregation worshipped at the church on Clinton Street until 1883, when a heavy snowfall caused the roof to collapse, made the walls structurally unsound, and the building unsafe for occupancy.⁶ This calamity occurred just after the congregation had spent \$3,000 improving the property, but the damage was so great that a new church was necessary.⁷

The Canton Company deeded a lot at the southwest corner of Canton Ave (now Ellwood) and Dillon Street to the church for \$5.⁸ In June 1883, the nationally-distributed *The American Architect and Building News* announced that Charles L. Carson had designed a 46' by 76' Gothic brick and stone church with a seating capacity for 400 people for Canton M.E. Church, and that it would cost \$15,000.⁹ The church was constructed by prominent builder Benjamin F. Bennett, who was also described as being the

congregation's "kindest earthly friend" for contributing \$2,500 towards the cost of the church.¹⁰ Bennett was a devout Methodist himself, and generously donated to Methodist institutions in the city.

Charles L. Carson was one of the founding members of the Baltimore chapter of the AIA. He designed many significant buildings in Baltimore, including the Mount Vernon Place Methodist Church (with Thomas Dixon), the first seven branches of the Enoch Pratt Free Library, academic buildings, religious buildings, and private homes across the city.¹¹ He designed the branch of the Enoch Pratt Free Library on O'Donnell Square, one block south of Canton M.E. Church in 1886.¹² Three other buildings designed by Charles Carson are Baltimore City Landmarks: Evergreen House, Grand Masonic Temple, and the Equitable Building – all of which were built in stages with contributions by other architects.

Benjamin F. Bennett, who built the church, was a prominent 19th century contractor and philanthropist. He began his business in 1851, and constructed many significant buildings in the city, including the Academy of Music, Broadway Market, Lovely Lane Methodist Church (First Methodist), the original Goucher College buildings, Mount Vernon Place Methodist Church, and numerous other churches and private residences "of more or less pretension to beauty and ornamentation."¹³ Bennett was a devout Methodist. He constructed many churches and buildings for the Methodist Church and served as a generous benefactor to Methodist institutions in the city, including Canton Methodist Episcopal Church.¹⁴ He advertised his services in the program for the General Conference of Methodist Episcopal Church in America, held in Baltimore in 1908.¹⁵ Three other buildings constructed by Benjamin Bennett are Baltimore City Landmarks: Lovely Lane Methodist Church (First Methodist), Ebenezer A.M.E. Church, and the Appold-Faust Building.

The Canton Methodist Episcopal Church was completed by December 1, 1884, and described as a "handsome two-story structure" and notable details included the arched stained glass windows "though which the edifice is excellently lighted."¹⁶ The two story church building had the main auditorium on the second floor, and a Sunday School, infant class room, and library on the first floor.¹⁷

In 1886, a brick parsonage was built adjacent to the church.¹⁸ Today, the brick parsonage no longer shares a parcel with the church, and is privately owned. The church celebrated the full payment of its debts in 1893.¹⁹ In 1906, the church was improved with electric lights and new frescos in the interior.²⁰

The church served generations of Methodists in Canton for 170 years. Throughout the 20th century, it played an important spiritual and civic role in the Canton community and the Baltimore Methodist Conference. The Church was known by several name variations over its long tenure. It was reportedly first called Clinton Street Church, but by 1872, the church was referred to Canton Methodist Episcopal Church.²¹ It was also called Canton Street Methodist Episcopal Church and Canton United Methodist Church.

On May 27, 2006, the members of the congregation voted to discontinue the church, and the church property was passed to the Baltimore-Washington Conference of the United Methodist Church, Inc.²² The church suffered a fire in 2007, when the building was vacant, which caused damage to the interior and to some of the stained glass windows.²³ The Conference later subdivided the property into five parcels, developing three of the parcels on Dillon Street. On January 28, 2010, the parcel on which the church is located, at 1000 S. Ellwood St., was sold to Joseph A. Schultz and Ann C. Schultz.²⁴

The property is listed on the National Register as a contributing property to the Canton National Historic District.

Architectural Description

This small brick Gothic Revival Church is a fine example of the style, designed by one of Baltimore's most prominent architects. This 2 ½ story structure retains integrity in spite of the recent fire, and still retains character-defining features such as arched stained glass windows, a slate roof, decorative brickwork, dormer windows, and buttresses.

Staff Recommendations

The property meets CHAP Landmark Designation Standards:

B. A Baltimore City Landmark may be a site, structure, landscape, building (or portion thereof), place, work of art, or other object which:

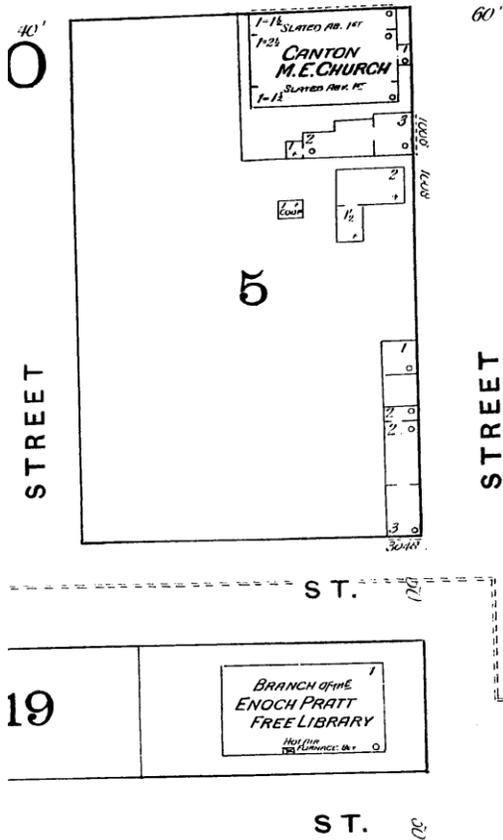
1. Is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of Baltimore history;
3. Embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represents the work of a master, or that possesses high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction.

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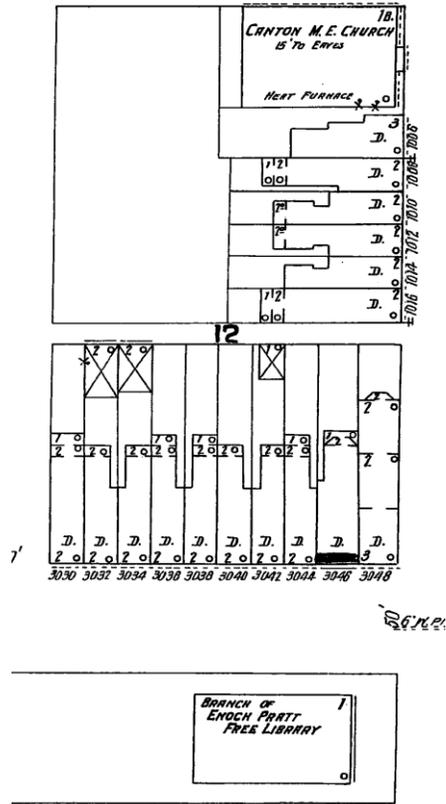
Locator Map



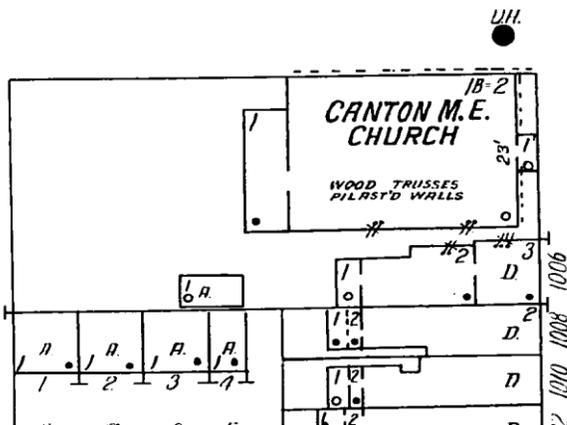
Historic Maps



1890 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, depicting the church, as well as the Enoch Pratt Library Branch, both of which were designed by Charles Carson within a 2 year period. (Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps 1890, Vol. 1, 1890, Sheet 32a)



1902 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, depicting the church, and also illustrating how quickly Canton developed in the early 20th c. (Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps 1901-1902, Vol. 4, 1902, Sheet 424)



1936 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, showing a 1-story rear addition to the church and an addition to the parcel on the rear. (Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps 1928-1936, Vol. 5, 1936, Sheet 523)

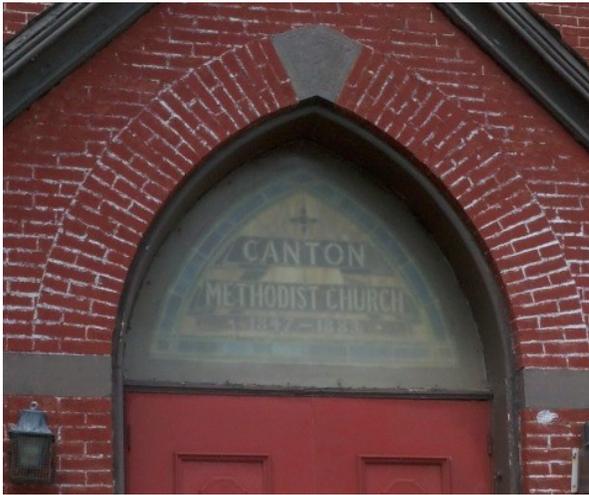
Images



Photo of the Canton Street M.E. Church published in the *Baltimore Methodism and the General Conference of 1908* (Baltimore: Committee of Finance of the Baltimore Committee of Entertainment, 1908), pg. 91.



The building today.



¹ George Washington Howard, *The Monumental City: Its Past History and Present Resources* (Baltimore: J.D. Ehlers & Co, 1873) pg 769. Available as a Google book; Robert J. Brugger, *Maryland, A Middle Temperament: 1634-1980* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988), pg. 352.

² "Emmanuel Evangelical Anniversary", *The Sun (1837-1987)*; Nov 1, 1897; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Baltimore Sun, The (1837-1987), pg. 8; "CHURCH PLIES CENTENNIAL: Yesterday's Service Began Series Of Observances", *The Sun (1837-1987)*; Nov 3, 1947; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Baltimore Sun, The (1837-1987), pg. 7; Henry Elliot Shepherd, *History of Baltimore, Maryland, from Its Founding as a Town to the Current Year 1729 - 1898*, (Baltimore: S.B. Nelson, 1898), pg. 379, Available as a Google Book; "OFFICIAL LIST_OF APPOINTMENTS BY THE METHODIST EPISCOPAL CONFERENCE", *The Sun (1837-1987)*; Mar 24, 1848; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Baltimore Sun, The (1837-1987), pg. 4; "Central Pennsylvania Conference" in *Minutes of the Annual*

Conferences of the Methodist Episcopal Church for the Year 1873, (New York: Nelson and Phillips, Cincinnati: Hitchcock and Walden), pg. 21. Available as a Google book.

³ “Emmanuel Evangelical Anniversary”; “Canton church observing 125th birthday” *The Sun (1837-1987)*; Oct 19, 1972; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Baltimore Sun, The (1837-1987), pg. B8

⁴ “CHURCH PLIES CENTENNIAL: Yesterday's Service Began Series Of Observances”; “Canton church observing 125th birthday”; Norman G. Rukert *Historic Canton: Baltimore's Industrial Heartland...And It's People* (Baltimore: Bodine and Associates, Inc., 1978), pg. 55

⁵ “Emmanuel Evangelical Anniversary”, *The Sun (1837-1987)*; Nov 1, 1897; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Baltimore Sun, The (1837-1987), pg. 8; Norman G. Rukert, pg. 55.

⁶ “CHURCH PLIES CENTENNIAL: Yesterday's Service Began Series Of Observances”; “LOCAL MATTERS”, *The Sun (1837-1987)*; Apr 19, 1883; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Baltimore Sun, The (1837-1987), pg. 6; “LOCAL MATTERS”, *The Sun (1837-1987)*; Oct 2, 1883; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Baltimore Sun, The (1837-1987), pg. 6; “LOCAL MATTERS”, *The Sun (1837-1987)*; Apr 19, 1883; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Baltimore Sun, The (1837-1987), pg. 6

⁷ “CHURCH PLIES CENTENNIAL: Yesterday's Service Began Series Of Observances”

⁸ Deed from Canton Company of Baltimore to Trustees of the Canton Methodist Episcopal Church of Baltimore County. October 26, 1883. Baltimore City Superior Court (Land Records), Liber RTA 984, Folio 114-117; “LOCAL MATTERS”, *The Sun (1837-1987)*; Oct 2, 1883; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Baltimore Sun, The (1837-1987), pg. 6; “Col. Denning's Will Set Aside: Brief Locals”, *The Sun (1837-1987)*; Nov 1, 1883; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Baltimore Sun, The (1837-1987), pg. 4

⁹ *The American Architect and Building News, Volume XIII, January-June 1883* (Boston: James R. Osgood & Co. 1883), pg. 287.

¹⁰ “CHURCH PLIES CENTENNIAL: Yesterday's Service Began Series Of Observances”

¹¹ Peter E. Kurtze, “Charles L. Carson” Baltimore Architecture Foundation, April 9, 2007, <http://baltimorearchitecture.org/biographies/charles-l-carson/>

¹² Carleton Jones, “BACK TRACKS: A LITERATE RETREAT AT WATER'S EDGE”, *The Sun (1837-1987)*; Oct 19, 1986; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Baltimore Sun, The (1837-1987), pg. W43

¹³ National Register of Historic Places, Faust Brothers Building, Baltimore, Baltimore City, Maryland, B-1081, Section 8, 4., citing *Half Century's Progress of the City of Baltimore*, (New York: International Publishing Co., n.d. [c.1886], p. 121; “BENJ. F. BENNETT DEAD: Venerable Builder And Philanthropist Succumbs ...”, *The Sun (1837-1987)*; Apr 25, 1913; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Baltimore Sun, The (1837-1987), pg. 14

¹⁴ “BENJ. F. BENNETT DEAD: Venerable Builder And Philanthropist Succumbs ...”; “BENJ. F. BENNETT'S WILL: Beneaths \$13,500 For Religious And ...”, *The Sun (1837-1987)*; Apr 29, 1913; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Baltimore Sun, The (1837-1987), pg. 4; “CHURCH PLIES CENTENNIAL: Yesterday's Service Began Series Of Observances”

¹⁵ *Baltimore Methodism and the General Conference of 1908* (Baltimore: Committee of Finance of the Baltimore Committee of Entertainment, 1908), pg. 87.

¹⁶ “The Ministry of Angels: Local Briefs”, *The Sun (1837-1987)*; Dec 1, 1884; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Baltimore Sun, The (1837-1987), pg. 4

¹⁷ “LOCAL MATTERS”, *The Sun (1837-1987)*; Oct 2, 1883; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Baltimore Sun, The (1837-1987), pg. 6

¹⁸ “Cigarmakers' Label Case: Brief Locals”, *The Sun (1837-1987)*; Oct 1, 1886; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Baltimore Sun, The (1837-1987), pg. 4

¹⁹ “SUBURBS AND COUNTY: Summer House of Prof. Eaton Burned-Lieut--Col. Wyse Dead”, *The Sun (1837-1987)*; Jan 23, 1893; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Baltimore Sun, The (1837-1987), pg. 8

²⁰ “To Reopen Canton Street Church”, *The Sun (1837-1987)*; Sep 8, 1906; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Baltimore Sun, The (1837-1987), pg. 7

²¹ Henry Elliot Shepherd , pg. 379; “LOCAL MATTERS”, *The Sun (1837-1987)*; Jun 24, 1872; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Baltimore Sun, The (1837-1987), pg. 1

²² Deed from The Baltimore-Washington Conference of the United Methodist Church, Inc. January 28, 2010. Baltimore City Circuit Court (Land Records), Liber FMC 12404, Folio 20.

²³ Erica Holcomb, “Baltimore Fire Department Firefighters Battle Church Fire” *Fire Department News*, August 28, 2007, <http://www.firefightingnews.com/articlePSO-US.cfm?articleID=36888>

²⁴ Ibid.