

PENNSYLVANIA HISTORIC RESOURCES SURVEY FORM
 OFFICE OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION Box 1026
 PA HISTORICAL & MUSEUM COMMISSION Harrisburg, PA 17120

7. Local survey organization
 Brandywine Conservancy, Inc.

1. County 029-Chester
 5. Present name
 St. Malachi Church

8. property owners name and address
 St. Malachi Church
 c/o Rev. George P. Schneider
 603 West 2nd Avenue
 Parkesburg, PA

9. tax parcel number / other number
 46-1-15.1

10. U.T.M. zone 18 Easting 427400 Northing 4416480

11. status (other surveys, lists etc.)
 CCHSS

usgs sheet: Coatesville

12. classification
 site () structure () object ()
 building (x)
 in N.R. district yes () no ()

13. date(s) (how determined)
 1838, 1865, 1937

15. style, design or folk type

19. original use
 150300 Religious

16. architect or engineer

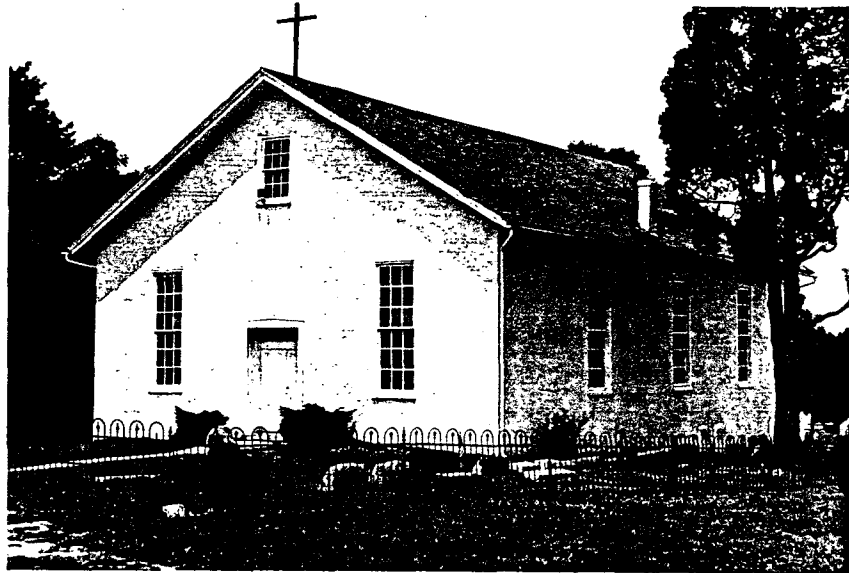
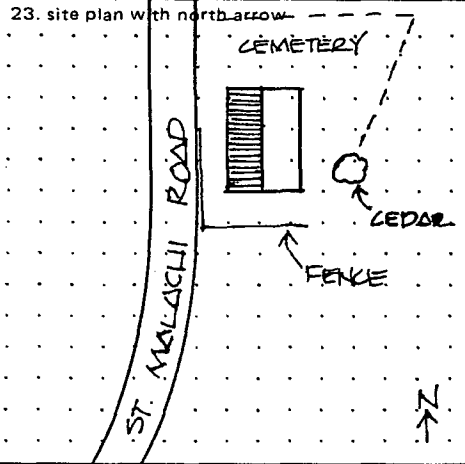
14. period
 1825-49 (03)

18. primary building mat./construction
 02-Stone

20. present use
 150300 Religious

21. condition
 excellent

22. integrity
 excellent



2. municipality
 Londonderry Township
 6. other name (historic name if any)
 Catholic Church, St. Catherine's

24. photo notation
 PC: Diane Snyder
 PD: 1984
 PV: Southeast elevation

25. file/location
 Brandywine Conservancy

26. brief description (note unusual features, integrity, environment, threats and associated buildings)
 Situated high on the rolling hills of Doe Run Valley, St. Malachi Church is visible for miles around. For nearly 150 years it has been a familiar and cherished landmark in this very rural area of Chester County.

The church and adjoining cemetery occupy about two acres of land in Londonderry Township above Doe Run a major tributary of the West Branch Brandywine River. Enclosed by a low iron fence, the cemetery is found on the north and east sides of the church. Generally, the tombstones are marble and rather small, and are placed in approximate rows. There are no planned walkways or formally landscaped areas. There are, however, a few shrubs and a lone cedar tree. Although the present church dates from 1838, the earliest tombstone in the cemetery bears the date 1771 and the name Thomas Maquire. Other Irish names in the cemetery include Dougherty, McKlee, MaGee, Kelly, Duffy, McLaughlin, and Ferron.

(continue on back if necessary)

27. history, significance and/or background
 Outside of Philadelphia, St. Malachi Church is the oldest Catholic mission church still in use in southeastern Pennsylvania. Its establishment in the 18th century in this remote area of Chester County is an indication of early Irish Catholic settlement, a rarity in Penn's original counties.

St. Malachi is located in a township which was first settled by the Irish. They were, however, Protestants and had been encouraged to immigrate. By 1730, the Irish

28. sources of information
 Chester County Historical Society - Clipping File; Futhey and Cope History of Chester County, (1881), page 300-301; Father George P. Scheider, interview, 1984.

29. prepared by:
 M. L. Wolf

30. date 11/84 revision(s)

(continue on back if necessary)

3. street address or specific location
 St. Malachi Road

4. survey code
 029-46-1
 (MAP 46-1)

26.

The church itself is plain and unpretentious. It is one-story, stuccoed stone, and rectangular with a plain gable roof. The centered entrance, with double doors and a five-light clear transom above, is found on the south gable end. Flanking the door are tall, narrow windows which, like those on the east and west walls, are nine-over-nine panes and double hung in plain rectangular frames. A simple wooden cross adorns the south peak of the gable roof.

The present church dates from 1838, but was substantially improved in 1865 and 1937. An article concerning St. Malachi's reopening in 1937 after being refurbished for its 1938 centennial describes at length its interior features: plain plaster walls hung with religious pictures in simple wooden frames; pews with entrance doors; interior wooden shutters; and modest altar at the north end. The writer notes, "The utter simplicity of the sanctuary and altar decorations is inspirational." Major contributions for the rehabilitation came from neighboring landowners Stanley J. Reeves and J. Plunkett Stewart, and from noted newspaper columnist Mark Sullivan in honor of his mother and father who were members of St. Malachi.

Since its centannial year, there have been minimal physical changes to St. Malachi. The sanctuary retains its original dozen or so rows of pews with entrance doors. A center aisle leads to the raised platform with original altar at the north end. The choir loft is still used and also has a small pump organ. The wooden shutters are also still functioning. Changes include the replacement of pot-bellied stoves with a concealed oil burner; the addition of a small table of sacrifice in front of the altar to permit, in accordance with Vatican II, the priest to face the congregation, and a baptismal font taken from St. Joseph's Church in Downingtown which recently was sold out of the Catholic Church.

The boundaries for the St. Malachi Church are its legal metes and bounds description on file at the Chester County Recorder of Deeds in Deed Book B61, page 593.

ACRES:

Cemetery: contributing
Area of Significance
x Religion
Period: x 1700-1799
x 1800-1899



EVALUATOR(S)

27. Presbyterians had established a church known as Fagg's Manor. Although St. Malachi Church's first members also were Irish, they practiced their religion quietly, meeting in houses or barns. Rather than congregate in villages like nearby Cochranville, they stayed in the hills of Doe Run Valley. St. Malachi's members were Catholics and not heartily welcomed in Penn's colony. As late as 1766 there was overt antagonism toward Catholics, expressed in this excerpt from a proprietary directive to members of the Assembly:

"...We recommend it to you to prevent as much as in you lies the coming in or settling of Papist (Catholics) within your Government and that you do not extend any Privileges to them nor admit any of them into any office, post or Employment whatsoever within your Government."

Indeed, in 1757, only 32-male and 23-female Irish Catholics were counted in Chester County.

As expressed by St. Malachi's current priest, Father George P. Scheider, the key to St. Malachi's formative years is in its graveyard. There a tombstone bearing the date 1771 indicates that by then the Catholics considered the land hallowed ground suitable for burial. The land was donated to the church by Andrew Maguire in 1794.

In 1800 work began on the first church intended to be log and stone. Apparently the project lagged and was not completed until 1838. The carpenter for the 1838 church was John Ferron, who is also associated with a nearby house (46-2). The Maguires and Henry Ferron did the stonework.

Always a mission church (i.e., never with a resident priest), St. Malachi's early members were first tended to by visiting missionaries. Its first formal association with a Catholic parish was with St. Agnes in West Chester which garnered its first resident priest about 1840. Also attached to St. Agnes at this time were the mission churches of Parkesburg, Downingtown, one in Lancaster County, and another in Delaware County. After a parish was established in Parkesburg in 1854-55, St. Malachi's became its mission church. Beginning in 1871 both St. Malachi and Parkesburg became missions of St. Cecilia's in Coatesville. After 1902, St. Malachi reverted to being a mission church of the Parkesburg parish, now called Our Lady of Consolation Church.

Of the above mentioned churches, St. Malachi is the only one to have remained a mission church in continuous session. Although there were times when services only were held quarterly or monthly, St. Malachi never closed its doors. In the last 10 years membership has increased dramatically--to about 100 families. Services are held every week and are attended regularly by about 180 people. Now, in addition to its priest, there are Catholics who travel many miles each week to worship at the plain stone church on the hill.

St. Malachi Church - Verbal Boundary Description

Beginning at a point in the bed of St. Malachi Road (T.362) a distance of 1820 feet south of the intersection of St. Malachi Road (T.362) with Runnymede Road (T.369)

Thence south 87 degrees 44 feet 00 inches east 170.00 feet to a stone

Thence south 26 degrees 34 feet 30 inches west 248.00 feet to a stone

Thence north 77 degrees 34 feet 30 inches west and crossing the said St. Malachi Road 170.00 feet to a pin.

Thence north 30 degrees 59 feet 30 inches east 208.00 feet to the point of beginning in the bed of St. Malachi Road

Containing approximately 1 acre.