

Ebenezer Academy
14680 Boydton Plank Road, Warfield, VA 23889
Brunswick County, Virginia

Ebenezer Academy, said to be the oldest Methodist school in American, had its genesis in the last quarter of the eighteenth century. Some of the brightest lights of early Methodism such as Bishop Francis Asbury and Edward Dromgoole had a hand in its establishment, though the exact date of its construction is not known. Razed in the twentieth century, the building was photographed in its later years.

The structure consisted of a ground story of native stone with a second story enclosed within a gambrel roof. The two end walls were each centered with an integral stone chimney. At the second story level the end walls were of wood frame sheathed with weatherboards. Although we have no description of interior subdivision, the photographs and dimensions suggest a plan of two rooms flanking a center hall on each floor.

The building was used for academic purposes until the mid-nineteenth century though Jeremiah Lee records that it passed out of Methodist control before 1810. Some of Brunswick's most prominent families sent their sons to be educated there.

History records several notable events which took place at Ebenezer during the nineteenth century. In April 1826 interested Presbyterians assembled there to establish the first organized Presbyterian congregation in Brunswick County. In 1829 a subscription of \$20,000 was raised in Brunswick to entice the proposed Randolph-Macon College to locate near Ebenezer Academy. This offer was rejected in favor of Mecklenburg County. Ebenezer Academy became the training grounds for a company of Confederate soldiers organized as the "Ebenezer Greys" under the command of Dr. Thomas J. Taylor. They saw action at Fort Donelson and Gaines Mill as Company E, 56th Virginia Infantry Regiment.

After the conflict the building was used for residential purposes which it served until neglect and disrepair caused it to be vacated. Early in the twentieth century a group of Methodists in the Petersburg District became interested in saving the old Academy building and formed a board of trustees which acquired nineteen acres surrounding the decaying structure. They determined that the building had deteriorated beyond feasible recall so it was razed leaving about two feet of the exterior stone walls standing. Within this enclosure a pyramidal monument was erected of stones salvaged from the walls. In this state the site has continued under the auspices of the Methodist Church. At one time the grounds were considered as a possible location for construction of housing for retired clergy.

Upon establishment of the Old Brunswick Circuit Foundation the site fell under the care of that organization. Since 2004 more than \$11,000 has been expended on site maintenance and securing and improving a complete right-of-way from the site to U.S. Route 1.

Proposed Work Program

1. Research and write a factual and detailed account of the history and evolution of the Ebenezer Academy site.
2. Compose and publish an illustrated tri-fold informational piece for the site.
3. Maintain the existing stone monument and remaining stone perimeter walls in accord with the highest preservation standards. This will include removal of the crude Portland cement repairs now evident and proper repointing with lime-rich mortar skillfully applied.
4. Compose and erect at least one illustrated weather-resistant informational sign at the site.
5. Research the evidence of any plaque ever having been mounted on the stone including original appearance, material and inscription. Fabricate and install a replica.
6. Upgrade the road along the right-of-way to provide an all-weather surface from U.S. 1 to the site. Provide necessary parking and turn-around space for safe public access. Provide a rack for bicycles.
7. Provide an easily-maintained walkway meeting accessibility standards from the parking area to the historic site.
8. Provide a suitable highly-visible entrance sign at U.S. Route 1.
9. Fabricate and erect a modern metal gate on the access road to control public access to the site.

Updated Improvement Items –from September 2012

1. Entrance directional sign on Route 1:
 - Two signs or one two-sided sign, with name and arrow placed at driveway meeting VDOT standards and location requirements
2. Designated parking area:
 - Defined by gravel/pavement;
 - Bumpers.
3. Marker(s) on obelisk :
 - Front side and possibly back
 - Suggest cast bronze
 - Wording similar to what was or may have been on the original markers
 - [research has been done to determine the original “missing” marker and has revealed a feeling that the intended marker was never installed]
4. Interpretive kiosk or slanted information signs:
 - Illustrated with pictures
 - History of Ebenezer Academy and other use of site.
 - Weatherproof information box for printed information, brochures and for guests to leave messages. Envelopes for making donations or memberships.
 - Visitor sign-in log.