

7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)							
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated		<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed	
	(Check One)				(Check One)			
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input type="checkbox"/> Unaltered		<input type="checkbox"/> Moved		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (If known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Carey's Camp Meeting Ground is situated in a grove of oaks, adjacent to Carey's United Methodist Church, near Philips Hill, Delaware. The campground is defined by a circle of 47 cabins, called tents, that face inward; a large open frame structure, called the tabernacle, occupies the center of the circle.

The tents are frame buildings, two stories high. On the first floor of each tent are two rooms: the kitchen in the rear is fully enclosed, but the front room is open on the side that faces the tabernacle. Most of the tents have open porches that serve as extensions of the front rooms. The upper floors of most tents are occupied by a single sleeping room, in which the beds are sometimes built into the frame of the structure. The upper floors generally are left unfinished, but the front rooms downstairs often are finished in plaster, panelling, or other wallcoverings. During camp meetings, the front rooms are separated from the porches by small curtains. A stair between the two first-floor rooms provides access to the upper story. Some of the smaller tents were built as much as eighty years ago; one was built during the summer of 1972. This newest tent is sheathed in corrugated metal, but the older tents all are clapboarded.

Most of the tents are owned by individual families, although the camp committee owns the boarding tent, the preacher's tent, and a few others. Tents may be bought and sold, but the camp committee exercises certain control, and has the privilege of first refusal when a tent is offered for sale. Food is served in the boarding tent, which has six sleeping rooms, and in a confectionery outside the circle.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Continuation Sheet)

STATE Delaware	
COUNTY Sussex	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

(Number all entries)

7. DESCRIPTION (continued)---

The tabernacle is a cruciform structure, built of frame and set on posts. A low plywood wall encloses its perimeter, and the upper halves of the outside walls are composed of hinged plywood shutters that are kept open during the camp session. Three wings of the tabernacle provide seating for the congregation, while the fourth wing serves as a chancel. At the crossing is a kneeling bench, where new converts kneel at the climax of a revival service. The tabernacle was originally a long shed, to which the side wings were added to accommodate a larger congregation. Outside, between the arms of the cruciform shelter, are benches where overflow crowds can be seated.

The first tabernacle at Carey's was a temporary affair of oak boughs, lighted by burning pine knots. Around 1910, the pine knots were replaced by gas lights, which yielded in turn to electric lights.

A horse pound that stood on the rear of the site has been replaced by a parking lot, and some families now are bringing self-contained camper trailers to the meetings, but the atmosphere of the camp meeting has not been appreciably altered by modern improvements.

SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- | | | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Columbian | <input type="checkbox"/> 16th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 18th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 20th Century |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 18th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 17th Century | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 19th Century | |

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) **1888**

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- | | | | |
|---|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal | <input type="checkbox"/> Education | <input type="checkbox"/> Political | <input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry | <input type="checkbox"/> Science | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape Architecture | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanities | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature | <input type="checkbox"/> Music | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commerce | <input type="checkbox"/> Military | <input type="checkbox"/> Theater | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications | <input type="checkbox"/> Music | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation | | | _____ |

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Camp meetings are among the oldest institutions in the Methodist Church, dating to the era when itinerant ministers preached in the open air to large congregations who sometimes travelled long distances to hear services that often lasted several days. Such bush meetings were held under temporary shelters made of boughs lashed together. As the bush meetings became institutionalized annual affairs, camp meeting grounds were established. Permanent tabernacles were erected, and regular members began to build structures to accommodate their families. The first camp meeting tents were rude temporary structures, as the name implies, but they soon were replaced by the permanent cabins.

During the last half of the nineteenth century, camp meetings could be found in all parts of Delaware and the Eastern Shore of Maryland, where the Methodists were the dominant religious body. The camp meeting at Rehoboth Beach formed the nucleus of the present resort city.

Today there are only three active camp meetings in Delaware, of which Carey's is the most vigorous.

Except for such amenities as refrigeration, electricity, garbage collection, gas ranges, and running water, the basic pattern of camp

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Continuation Sheet)

STATE	
Delaware	
COUNTY	
Sussex	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

(Number all entries)

8. SIGNIFICANCE (continued)---

meeting at Carey's is little changed from the early years of the movement. Rural families from the neighborhood move into their tents the first day of the meeting, and stay there throughout the ten-day session, even though improved transportation has eliminated the need for most families to stay overnight. Days are occupied with household chores, socializing, and religious instruction. In the evening, an evangelistic service is held in the tabernacle, climaxed by a call for converts. The principal service of the day traditionally is held in the evening, because the men of the camp usually go home during the day, if they live nearby, to tend their farms and businesses.

Carey's Methodist Church was built in 1886, on ground at The Oaks deeded in 1884 by Elijah W. Carey to the Shortly Circuit M.E. Church. A bush meeting apparently had been held for some years in the grove adjacent to the church yard, and provided the impetus for the establishment of both the church and the camp meeting. Since its formal establishment in 1888, the camp committee has been the governing body of a distinct camp meeting organization, even though its officers generally are the same as those of the church.