

**RESOLUTION FOR “CANAAAN”, THE EDWARD DROMGOOLE, SR.  
HOUSE TO BE LISTED AS A HISTORIC SITE WITH THE GENERAL  
COMMISSION OF ARCHIVES AND HISTORY OF THE UNITED  
METHODIST CHURCH**

Whereas, it is believed that “Canaan” (built from 1796 to 1798), Valentines, Brunswick County, Virginia, the home of Edward Dromgoole, Sr. and Rebecca Walton Dromgoole, his wife, is the only extant home within the bounds of the Virginia Conference now standing that once belonged to an important eighteenth-century Methodist circuit rider and local pastor where also Methodist class meetings, preaching, and worship services took place; and

Whereas, Edward Dromgoole, Sr. (1751-1835) is widely recognized as a significant figure in colonial American Methodism who immigrated from Ireland to Baltimore, Maryland in 1770 with a letter of introduction to a fellow Irishman, Robert Strawbridge, the founder of American Methodism, heard Strawbridge preach in 1770, requested that Strawbridge come to Frederick to preach that “I might hear and be saved, started himself to preach in 1772, received an appointment in 1775 with George Shadford during the First Great Awakening in Virginia (1772-1777) to minister on the Brunswick Circuit in southside Virginia and North Carolina along with Devereux Jarratt, the noted Anglican preacher from nearby Dinwiddie County. who assisted in the spread of Methodist revival among those in the Church of England; and

Whereas, Edward Dromgoole, Sr. is widely recognized as a Methodist leader during the American Revolution, since he was one of five selected to supervise Methodism should all British missionaries depart, he kept the rapidly-growing Methodist movement together during this war at a time when mostly all British-born Methodist itinerants had left the country or stopped preaching, he took the oath of allegiance to the American cause in Sussex County, Virginia, he read aloud a copy of the Declaration of Independence to a congregation in Halifax County, North Carolina, he worked with Francis Asbury’s negotiating party during the ordination and sacraments controversy during the Revolutionary War when members were deprived of Anglican clergy for their sacraments; and

Whereas, Edward Dromgoole, Sr. is recognized for his assistance in forming the Methodist Episcopal Church as an American denomination separate from the Anglican Church by writing John Wesley on May 22, 1783 showing that Methodism in America had made decided progress in spite of the war and telling

him of the great esteem that the American Methodists had for Francis Asbury and their desire for him “to superintend the whole work, and go through all the circuits once a year” by attending the Christmas Conference held in Baltimore in 1784 where the Methodist Episcopal Church was organized and Thomas Coke and Francis Asbury were made general superintendents, later called bishops; and by offering leadership and hospitality at the Second Conference of Methodism at Mason-Tillet House/Mason Chapel in 1785; and

Whereas, since Edward Dromgoole, Sr., who had been influenced by the anti-slavery teaching of John Wesley and the ruling at the Christmas Conference of 1785 that Methodists should free their enslaved people, Dromgoole became convinced of the injustice of slavery and consequently executed in 1791 a deed for the gradual emancipation of his eleven slaves which he carried out, then bought land in the free state of Ohio to settle ( as he wrote in 1805) “ because he wanted to move to a state where none of the human race are in captivity,” but in the end he stayed in Virginia due to the ill health of his wife and other concerns, died in 1835, and bequeathed to his heirs 16 slaves that he had acquired in later years to assist him on his plantation; and

Whereas, Edward Dromgoole, Sr. served effectively as a travelling preacher during the days of the First Great Awakening and the commencement of the Second Great Awakening during which he wrote “Rich and Poor, Young and Old, Black and White, shared largely of this Divine Visitation”; and

Whereas, Edward Dromgoole, Sr. helped establish in 1784, along with Bishop Francis Asbury and the Rev. Peter Pelham, the Ebenezer Academy, the first Methodist school in Virginia and possibly in America and forerunner of Randolph-Macon College in Boydton, and served as a trustee of Ebenezer Academy which remained under Methodist control until 1800 and which continued until 1846; and

Whereas, Edward Dromgoole, Sr. felt compelled to abandon itinerancy following the death of two of his children so he could spend more time raising his remaining family and ,consequently, located in 1786 as a local pastor who farmed his plantation called “Sligo”, lived in another home that no longer stands, and, according to dendrochronology, built the present home “Canaan” between 1796 and 1798 from whence he traveled to preach the gospel when needed on the Brunswick Circuit from 1786 to 1835 and also ran a store, operated a sawmill, and served as a magistrate of the Brunswick County Court for 45 years; and

Whereas, Edward and Rebecca Dromgoole offered housing and hospitality to Methodist preachers in their previous home and at “Canaan” such as Richard Whatcoat, Jesse Lee, Nicholas Snethen, Peter Pelham, and John Easter, made their home a regular stopping and preaching place for Bishop Francis Asbury on his travels throughout the United States, nursed Asbury back to health in 1798; and’

Whereas, Bishop Francis Asbury ordained Edward Dromgoole, Sr. as an elder and his sons Edward Dromgoole, Jr. and Thomas Dromgoole as deacons at Dromgoole’s Chapel on his last trip to “Canaan” on February 12, 1815 and preached at “Canaan;” and

Whereas, “Canaan,” was also the home of their son George Coke Dromgoole, who served six terms in the United States House of Representatives, and is also the burial place of Edward Dromgoole, Sr. and his family; and

Whereas, the extensive Dromgoole Collections at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and the Library of Virginia containing the papers of Edward Dromgoole, Sr. and his children form an important source of information for scholars of early Methodism, political life, and plantation life; and

Whereas, the Old Brunswick Circuit Foundation exists to restore and preserve the home of Edward and Rebecca Dromgoole and needs to establish its historic significance for those providing grants for this historic preservation of the last vestige of the early American Methodist Episcopal heritage of the Virginia Conference;

**Be it resolved that the Virginia Conference of the United Methodist Church at its session on October 31, 2020 petitions the General Commission on Archives and History of the United Methodist Church to designate “Canaan,” the home of Edward Dromgoole, Sr. as a United Methodist Historic Site and to submit the completed application form “Registration of a United Methodist Historic Site” to the said General Commission on Archives and History with the signature of the bishop and conference secretary.**

The resolution and the application form were drafted by The Rev. Dr. Arthur Dicken Thomas, Jr. and approved by the Old Brunswick Circuit Foundation, the Virginia Conference Historical Society, and the Virginia Conference Commission on Archives and History.