

CH-251

## St. John's Chapel, (St. John's Methodist Episcopal Chapel)

### **Architectural Survey File**

This is the architectural survey file for this MIHP record. The survey file is organized reverse-chronological (that is, with the latest material on top). It contains all MIHP inventory forms, National Register nomination forms, determinations of eligibility (DOE) forms, and accompanying documentation such as photographs and maps.

Users should be aware that additional undigitized material about this property may be found in on-site architectural reports, copies of HABS/HAER or other documentation, drawings, and the “vertical files” at the MHT Library in Crownsville. The vertical files may include newspaper clippings, field notes, draft versions of forms and architectural reports, photographs, maps, and drawings. Researchers who need a thorough understanding of this property should plan to visit the MHT Library as part of their research project; look at the MHT web site ([mht.maryland.gov](http://mht.maryland.gov)) for details about how to make an appointment.

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***Last Updated: 11-21-2003***

**CH-251**  
**St. John's Chapel**  
**Pomonkey vic.**  
**Private**

**1901**

Typical of the modest Late Gothic Revival-style churches built in Charles County around the turn of the 20th century, St. John's Chapel in Pomonkey remains nearly entirely intact with few interior or exterior alterations. The 1-story, frame front gable church features a centered square bell tower, traceried lancet windows, and a decorative scroll-sawn frieze below the tower's pyramidal roof. Three bays wide, and five deep, the church building also retains its original interior furnishings and finishes.

Erected in 1901, St. John's Chapel is the second church built by the Methodist Episcopal Church in Pomonkey. The first, erected in 1842, was located in what is still St. John's Chapel Cemetery on Bumpy Oak Road (see CH-250). The second church, located on the southeast side of Livingston Road between Bumpy Oak and Pomfret roads, is an excellent example of a turn-of-the-20th-century Gothic Revival-style church. Both its interior and exterior are essentially unchanged from the time of its construction. A basement was added to the church in 1966, at which time it was moved a short distance onto its new foundation.

MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST  
MD INVENTORY OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES

Inventory No. CH-251

=====

1. Name of Property

=====

historic name St. John's Chapel, Pomonkey

common/other name \_\_\_\_\_

=====

2. Location

=====

street & number 3880 Livingston Road not for publication \_\_\_\_\_

city or town Pomonkey vicinity X state Maryland code MD

county Charles code 017 zip code 20640

=====

3. State/Federal Agency Certification N/A

=====

4. National Park Service Certification N/A

=====

5. Classification

=====

Ownership of Property (Check all that apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property (Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing		Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>		buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>		sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>		structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>		objects
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>		Total

Is this property listed in the National Register?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ Name of Listing \_\_\_\_\_

No X

MARYLAND INVENTORY OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Inventory No. CH-251

=====  
6. Function or Use  
=====

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: RELIGIOUS Sub: Church  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: RELIGIOUS Sub: Church  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

=====  
7. Description  
=====

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

Late Gothic Revival  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation solid: concrete block with stretcher bond brick  
roof front gable: asphalt shingles  
walls frame: wood German siding  
other foundation rebuilt when church  
moved in 1966

Narrative Description (Describe the historic and current condition of the property.)

See Continuation Sheet No. 7-1

=====  
8. Statement of Significance  
=====

Applicable National Register Criteria (Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations (Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or a grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

MARYLAND INVENTORY OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Inventory No. CH-251

=====  
Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

RELIGION

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance 1901-1949

Significant Dates 1901

1966

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Cultural Affiliation Undefined

Architect/Builder Unknown

Narrative Statement of Significance (Explain the significance of the property.)

See Continuation Sheet No. 8-1

=====  
9. Major Bibliographical References  
=====

(Cite the books, articles, legal records, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

Brown, Jack D., et al. *Charles County, Maryland, A History*. Charles County Bicentennial Committee, 1976.

Charles County Land Records, Charles County Courthouse, La Plata, Maryland.

*A Guide to Historic Episcopal Churches of Southern Maryland, 1634-1984*. Unpublished booklet available at Charles County Community College, Southern Maryland Studies Center, (1984?).

Interview with Louise J. Highby, Pomomkey, Maryland, December 9, 1998.

Klaphor, Margaret Brown. *The History of Charles County, Maryland*. La Plata, MD: Charles County Tercentenary, Inc., 1958.

=====  
10. Geographical Data  
=====

Acreage of Property 1 acre

**Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)**

The property at 3880 Livingston Road is designated as Parcel 448 on Map 12, Grid 17 on the Charles County Property Map.

**Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)**

St. John's Chapel has been associated with Parcel 448, Map 12 since its construction in 1901.

=====  
11. Form Prepared By  
=====

name/title Kathryn Gettings Smith, Architectural Historian  
organization Charles County Planning Dept. date Dec. 1, 1998  
street & number P.O. Box B telephone 301-645-0689  
city or town La Plata state MD zip code 20646  
=====

12. Property Owner  
=====

name St. John's Chapel c/o W.P. Jameson, Treasurer  
street & number 6455 Indian Head Hwy. telephone 301-283-2565  
city or town Indian Head state MD zip code 20640  
=====

MARYLAND INVENTORY OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Inventory No. CH-251

Section 7 Page 1

St. John's Chapel  
name of property  
Charles County, Maryland  
county and state

=====  
Typical of the modest Late Gothic Revival-style churches built in Charles County around the turn of the 20th century, St. John's Chapel in Pomonkey remains nearly entirely intact with few alterations. The 1-story, frame front gable church features a centered square bell tower, traceried lancet windows, and a decorative scroll-sawn frieze below the tower's pyramidal roof. Three bays wide, and five deep, the church building also retains its original interior furnishings and finishes.

St. John's Chapel occupies a level 1-acre lot on the southwest side of Livingston Road in Pomonkey. The lot is bounded on the south, west and east by the Maryland Airport property. It is scattered with numerous mature trees, including several oak trees. The church is set approximately one hundred feet back from Livingston Road and is fronted by a dirt half-circle driveway.

Erected in 1901, St. John Chapel was moved approximately thirty feet northeast in 1966 in order to provide for the excavation of a basement. Therefore, the continuous stretcher-bond brick foundation with its fixed single light windows set in wells does not represent the building's original foundation. The church once stood on two-foot high brick piers. The frame walls, however, are still clad in the original German wood siding, and articulated by a five-inch stringer course stretching across the facade just above the windows and door. A single interior brick chimney flue extends above the roof line at the north corner of the building, one of two original stove flues. The reclad asphalt-shingle roof terminates in open eaves and molded raking cornices on either gable end. The bell tower roof is distinguished by its tall pyramidal proportions and a sweeping flair at the eaves. A granite cornerstone set in the brick foundation at the north corner of the building reads "St. John's, 1901."

Oriented northwest towards Livingston Road, the church's facade is divided into three bays. The center of these bays consists of the projecting square bell tower which contains a double-leaf paneled wood door crowned by a pointed arch transom divided into three lights. The door's casing consists of simple square-edged moldings. This central bay is flanked on either side by single traceried lancet windows set on the front wall of the main body of the church. These are also trimmed with square-edged wood casings, as are all the windows throughout the building. The second level of the bell tower contains another lancet window matching those below. Above this window, the tower resolves in a pierced frieze decorated with a row of quatrefoil-shaped openings below three

MARYLAND INVENTORY OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

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Section 7 Page 1

St. John's Chapel

name of property

Charles County, Maryland

county and state

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St. John's Chapel occupies a level 1-acre lot on the southwest side of Livingston Road in Pomonkey. The lot is bounded on the south, west and east by the Maryland Airport property. It is scattered with numerous mature trees, including several oak trees. The church is set approximately one hundred feet back from Livingston Road and is fronted by a dirt half-circle driveway.

Erected in 1901, St. John Chapel was moved approximately thirty feet northeast in 1966 in order to provide for the excavation of a basement. Therefore, the continuous stretcher-bond brick foundation with its fixed single light windows set in wells does not represent the building's original foundation. The church once stood on two-foot high brick piers. The frame walls, however, are still clad in the original German wood siding, and articulated by a five-inch stringer course stretching across the facade just above the windows and door. A single interior brick chimney flue extends above the roof line at the north corner of the building, one of two original stove flues. The reclad asphalt-shingle roof terminates in open eaves and molded raking cornices on either gable end. The bell tower roof is distinguished by its tall pyramidal proportions and a sweeping flair at the eaves. A granite cornerstone set in the brick foundation at the north corner of the building reads "St. John's, 1901."

Oriented northwest towards Livingston Road, the church's facade is divided into three bays. The center of these bays consists of the projecting square bell tower which contains a double-leaf paneled wood door crowned by a pointed arch transom divided into three lights. The door's casing consists of simple square-edged moldings. This central bay is flanked on either side by single traceried lancet windows set on the front wall of the main body of the church. These are also trimmed with square-edged wood casings, as are all the windows throughout the building. The second level of the bell tower contains another lancet window matching those below. Above this window, the tower resolves in a pierced frieze decorated with a row of quatrefoil-shaped openings below three

MARYLAND INVENTORY OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Inventory No. CH-251

Section 7 Page 2

St. John's Chapel  
name of property  
Charles County, Maryland  
county and state

=====

scroll-sawn arched openings set directly under the flared eaves of the roof.

The church's flanks are divided into five bays, the first four of which are evenly spaced and contain one traceried lancet window each. The fifth bay of the northeast and southwest sides is distinguished by a small bump-out. On the southwest, this bump-out contains a single-leaf door bay holding a replacement paneled wood door and a small lancet window to its side. The northeast side bump-out is pierced by a small lancet window only. Along the southwest and northeast foundation walls, a series of 1-light wood casement windows punctures the brick, letting light into the basement. In addition, a single-leaf panel-and-light wood door approached by a stair on the northeast side of the building provides access to the basement.

The rear of the church features three window bays. The central bay contains a tripartite lancet window with figural stained glass lights. Two smaller lancet windows flank the central one. Fishscale shingles adorn the upper portion of the gable end, and a second panel-and-light wood door provides entry to the basement at this elevation.

INTERIOR:

The church is entered through a six by ten-foot vestibule lighted by two narrow lancet windows set in the northeast and southwest walls. The sanctuary itself is composed of a single open space that terminates at the chancel wall which is divided into three pointed arches, one large one flanked by two smaller arches. The chancel is divided into a central altar space flanked by short aisles. Pointed arches divides these side aisles from the altar. Two rows of open wooden pews occupy the center of the sanctuary, with aisles passing between the two rows and along each side wall.

The interior is finished with dark stained woodwork, trim and plaster. The original wood floor has been covered by red carpeting, while the walls above the wainscoting is finished with smooth plaster. The wainscoting consists of reeded tongue-and-groove vertical board. The doors and windows are trimmed with molded wood casings, and some are filled with stained glass. The arches dividing the sanctuary from the chancel and the chancel aisles from the altar are set on square fluted columns with Tuscan-style capitals.

MARYLAND INVENTORY OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Inventory No. CH-251

Section 7 Page 3

St. John's Chapel  
name of property  
Charles County, Maryland  
county and state

=====

The open ceiling features exposed chamfered rafters that are attached at the walls with decorative wood brackets. Several decorative pendants drop from the apex of the roof. The walls are stabilized by metal tie rods running between the southwest and northeast side walls.

Several of the stained glass windows are original to the church, including the figurative tripartite window behind the altar featuring Christ, the Shepherd. Over the years, members of the congregation have donated a number of stained glass windows that now grace the building.

The majority of the furnishings are original to the building, and were handmade by the parishioners. Several of the pieces from the first church building also remain. These include the former altar table, now located at the back of the sanctuary.

MARYLAND INVENTORY OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Inventory No. CH-251

Section 8 Page 1

St. John's Chapel  
name of property  
Charles County, Maryland  
county and state

=====

Erected in 1901, St. John's Chapel is the second church built by the Methodist Episcopal Church in Pomonkey. The first, erected in 1842, was located in what is still St. John's Chapel Cemetery on Bumpy Oak Road (see CH-250). The second church, located on the southeast side of Livingston Road between Bumpy Oak and Pomfret roads, is an excellent example of a turn-of-the-20th-century Gothic Revival-style church. Both its interior and exterior are essentially unchanged from the time of its construction.

St. John's Chapel, Pomonkey was established in 1824 as a mission of Christ Church, St. John's Parish, Accokeek in Prince George's County. Prior to the erection of a permanent chapel on the present cemetery site, the congregation worshiped in several log structures that burned before they could be dedicated. The permanent frame chapel was dedicated by Bishop Whittingham of Maryland in 1842.<sup>1</sup> The earliest grave site located in the cemetery dates to 1843. The grave belongs to George Dement who died September 25, 1843.

The new church was built in the community of Pomonkey, long a crossroads of trade and transportation. By the mid-19th century Pomonkey had become a commercial center with several merchants, a livery, granary, and blacksmith shop. Prior to the Civil War, the frame St. John's Chapel served a dual role, as a place of worship, and as the local schoolhouse.<sup>2</sup>

In 1861, Union troops chose Pomonkey as its first occupation site in southern Maryland. The 3rd Indiana Cavalry under Colonel Starr established a camp at Pomonkey in 1861. St. John's church and churchyard were utilized as the camp's headquarters with the church serving as an officers' stable. The church's interior furnishings were removed at this time.

After the Civil War, the 1842 church was minimally repaired, and continued in use along with the burial ground. However, after the opening of the U.S. Naval powder factory at Indian Head in 1890, and the subsequent abandonment of many of the local residences, the

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<sup>1</sup> *A Guide to Historic Episcopal Churches of Southern Maryland, 1634-1984*, Unpublished booklet available at Charles County Community College, Southern Maryland Studies Center, (1984?).

<sup>2</sup> Interview with Louise J. Highby, Pomonkey, Maryland, December 9, 1998.

MARYLAND INVENTORY OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Inventory No. CH-251

Section 8 Page 2

St. John's Chapel  
name of property  
Charles County, Maryland  
county and state

=====  
congregation was convinced that a new church was needed to serve the growing Indian Head population. In addition, the old church was becoming deteriorated. Therefore, St. James Episcopal Church, Indian Head was established in the early 1900s, and St. John's Chapel was moved to a new building erected a short distance to the north in 1901.

The former 1842 frame chapel has had a long and varied life since its dismantling in the early 1900s. At that time, the building was moved on five freight wagons to Raymond Avenue in Indian Head, and occupied by the new St. James Episcopal church. Later, the St. James congregation traded the building with the local Baptist congregation for a new church site. When the Baptists outgrew the old church, they sold it to the Church of the Nazarene. Eventually, the Nazarenes erected a new house of worship, selling the 1842 frame church to a private citizen who moved it to a lot on Mattingly Avenue, now adjacent to St. Mary Star of the Sea Church. The old church has since been renovated for use as a residence.

The new St. John's Chapel, completed in 1901, was erected upon a 1-2/5ths-acre lot donated by The Pomonkey Milling & Feed Company, the neighboring lumber and feed business. The deed transferring the property to the vestry of St. John's Parish was recorded in May 1902, and stated that the land was "for the use of a church, house of worship, parsonage, and burying ground...."

Since its completion, St. John's Chapel has remained essentially in its original condition. The only major alteration was the moving of the building approximately thirty feet to the northeast atop a newly dug basement in 1966. This new space was designed to accommodate a Sunday school classroom, however, moisture problems have rendered the space nearly unusable.

MARYLAND INVENTORY OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Inventory No. CH-251

St. John's Chapel  
name of property  
Charles County, Maryland  
county and state

=====

**HISTORIC CONTEXT:**

**Geographic Organization:** Western Shore

**Chronological/Development Period (s):**

Industrial/Urban Dominance, 1870-  
1930

**Prehistoric/Historic Period Theme (s):**

RELIGION

**RESOURCE TYPE(S)**

**Category:** Building

**Historic Environment:** Rural

**Historic Function (s):** RELIGIOUS/Church

**Known Design Source:** Unknown

MARYLAND INVENTORY OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Inventory No. CH-251

St. John's Chapel  
name of property  
Charles County, Maryland  
county and state

=====  
**Chain of Title:**

February 22, 1898:

Adison Posey & Benjamin F. & Mary  
Dement to "The Pomonkey Milling &  
Feed Company" of Charles County  
Charles County Land Records  
Liber JST 9 Folio 607

May 14, 1902:

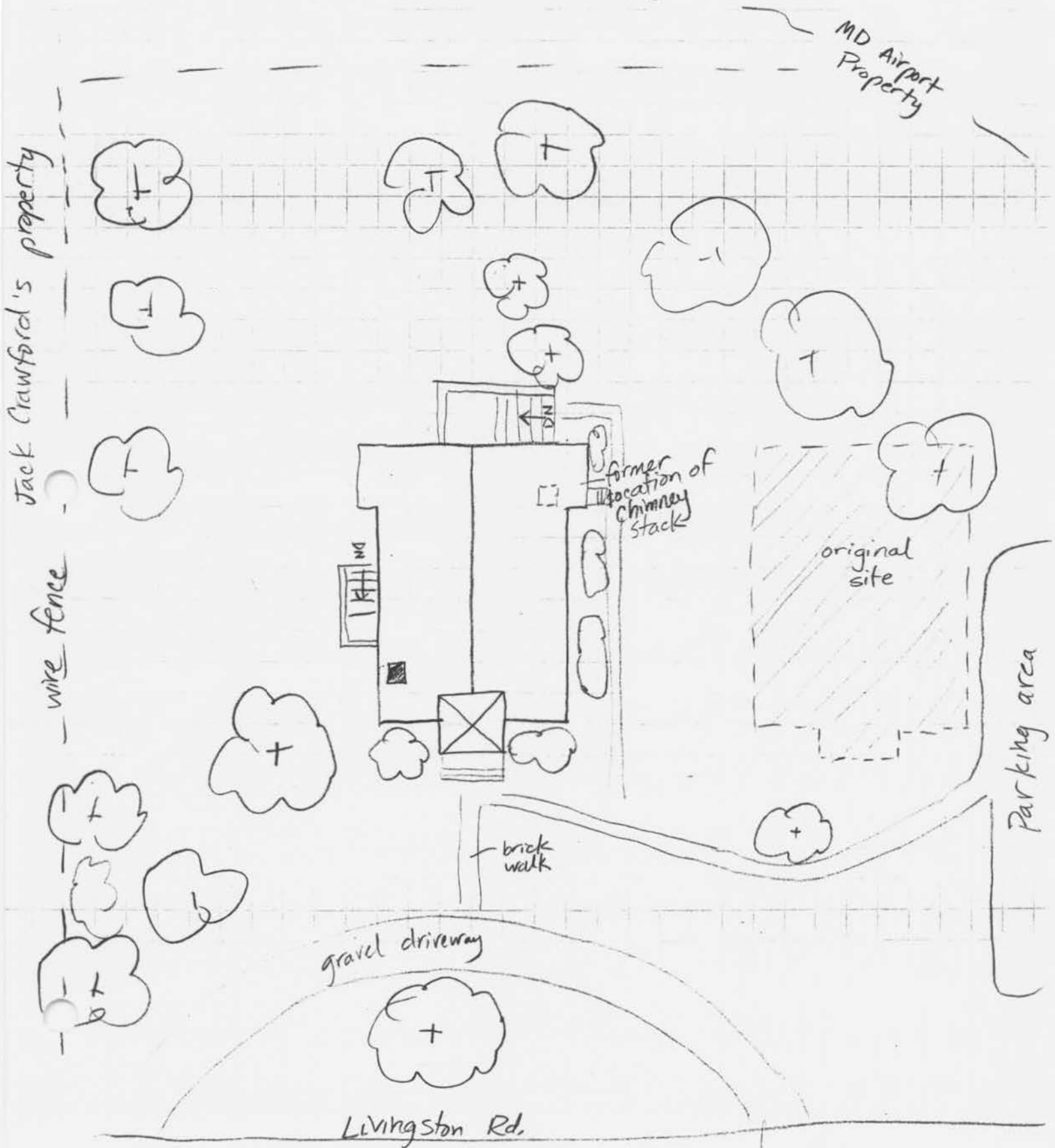
Benjamin Tubman, H. Marshall Thomas,  
John W. Waring & Edward T.  
McPherson, trading as "The Pomonkey  
Milling & Feed Company" of Charles  
County to Vestry of St. John's  
Parish in Charles & Prince George's  
County  
1 and 2/5 acres  
For use as a church, house of  
worship, parsonage & burying ground.  
Portions of tracts known as "Part of  
Dent's Level" and "Cowpens Enlarged"  
Charles County Land Records  
Liber 12 Folio 703

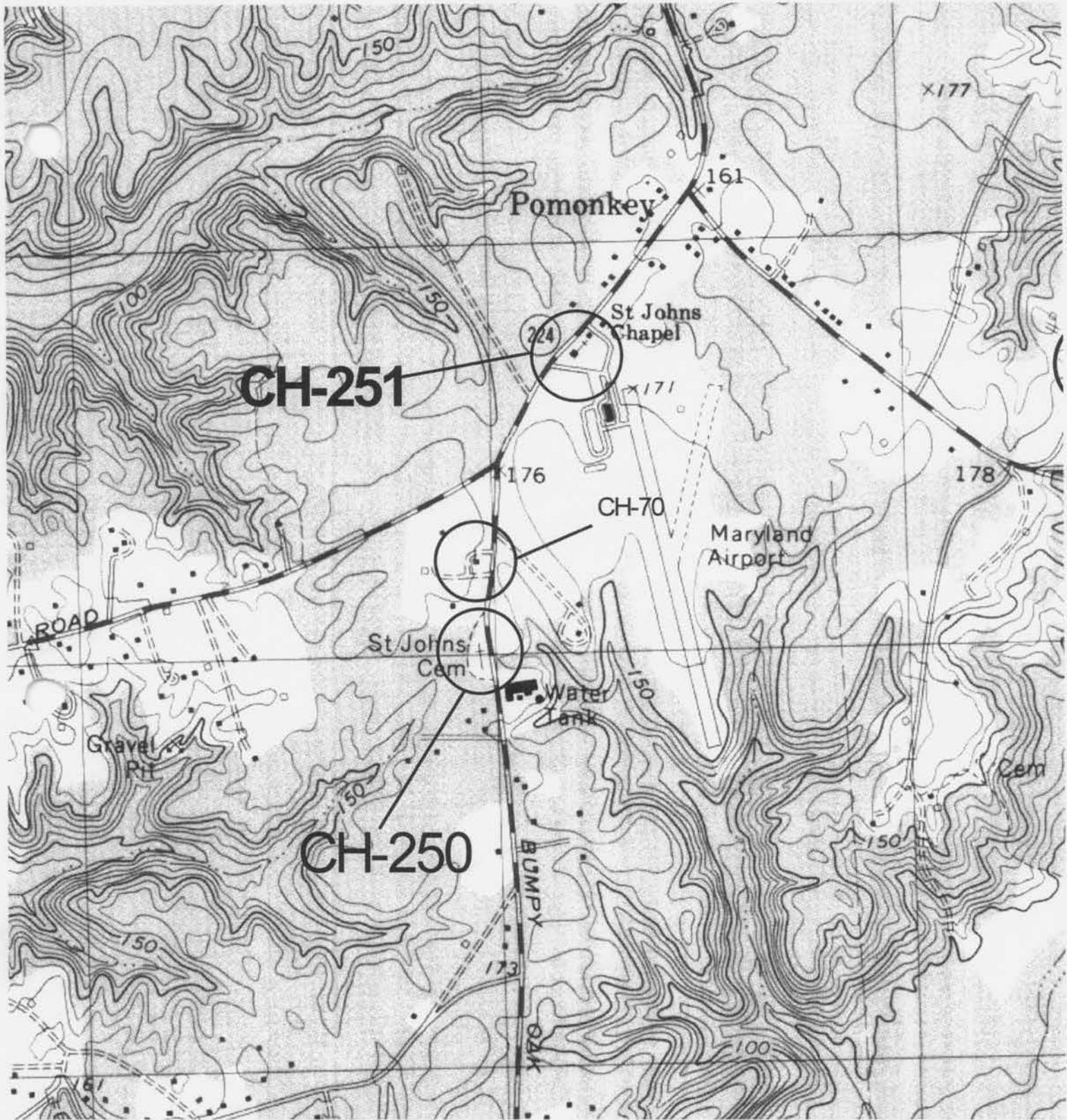
RESOURCE SKETCH MAP

9/98

ST. JOHN'S CHAPEL, POMONKEY  
CHARLES COUNTY, MD  
Livingston Rd. / Pomonkey vic.

CH-251





St. John's Chapel, Pomonkey  
Charles County, MD

CH-251

PORT TOBACCO, MD QUAD



CH-251

ST. JOHNS CHAPEL

CHARLES COUNTY, MD

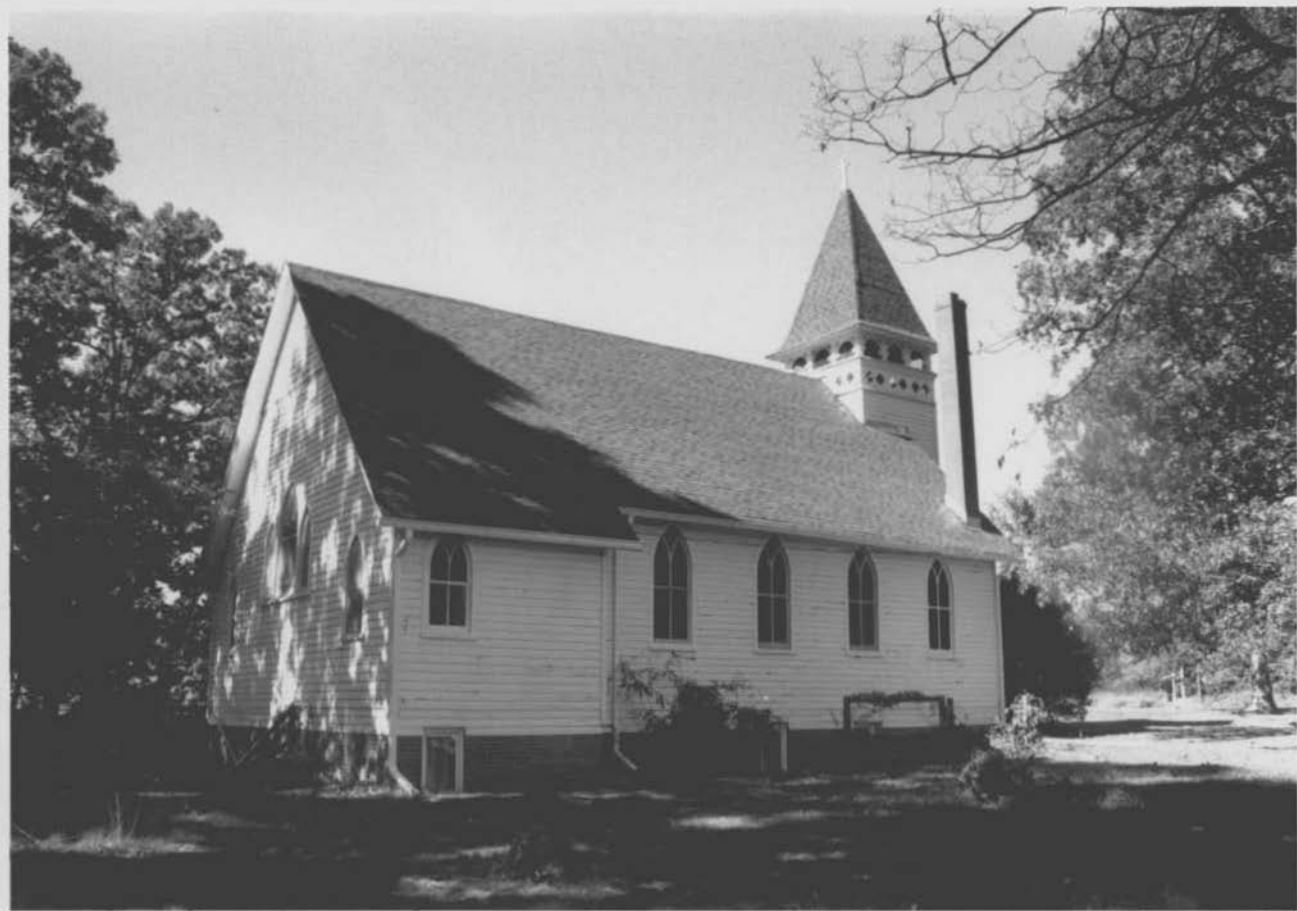
K.G. SMITH

9/98

MARYLAND SHPO

SE ELEVATION

3 OF 7



CH-251

ST. JOHN S CHAPEL

CHARLES COUNTY, MD

K.G. SMITH

9/98

MARYLAND SHPO

NE ELEVATION

4 OF 7



CH-251

ST. JOHNS CHAPEL  
CHARLES COUNTY, MD  
K.G. SMITH

9/98

MARYLAND SHPO

FACADE, LOOKING SE

1 OF 7



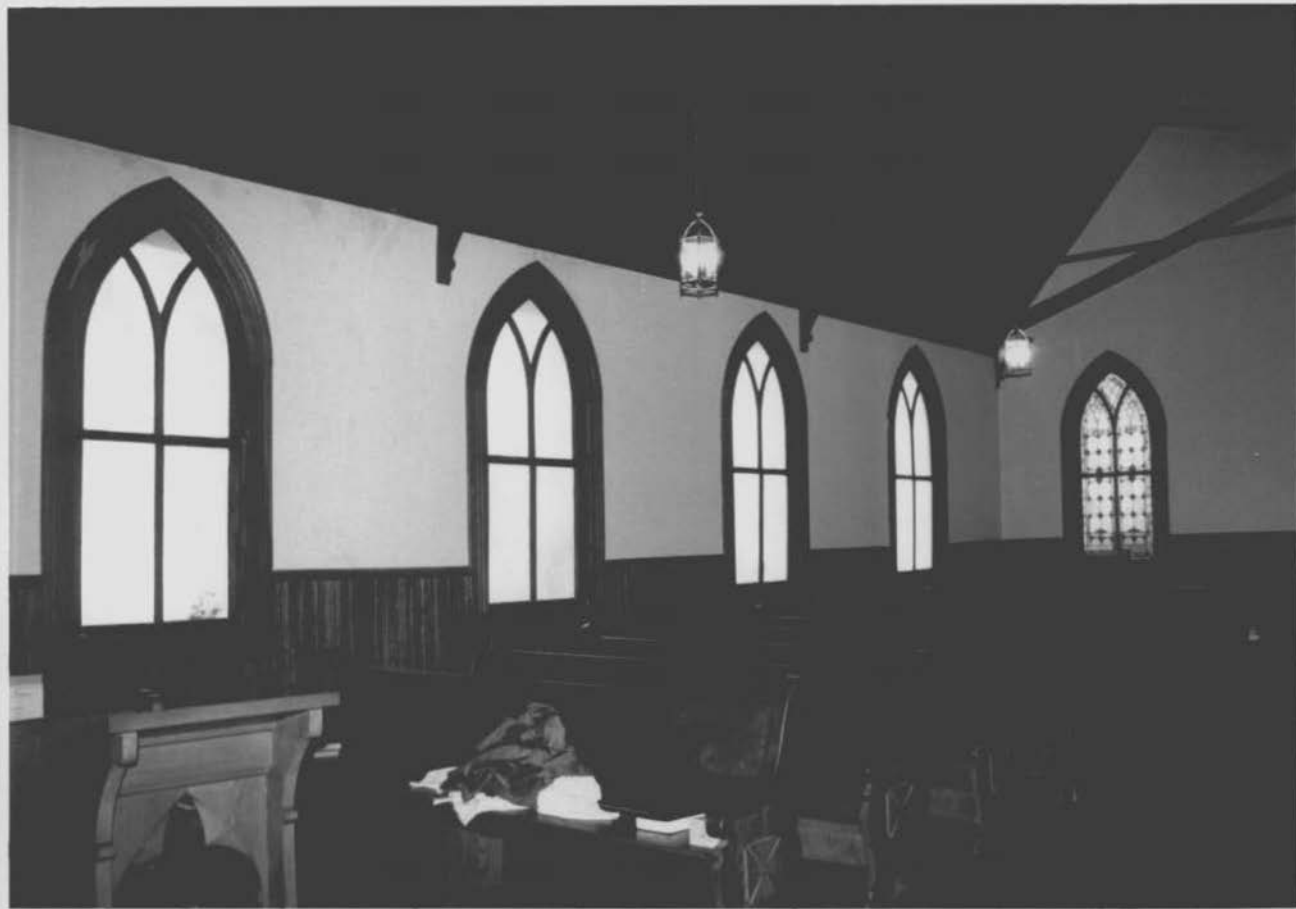
CH-251

ST. JOHNS CHAPEL  
CHARLES COUNTY, MD  
K.G. SMITH

9/98

MARYLAND SHPO  
SW ELEVATION

2 OF 7



CH-251

ST. JOHNS CHAPEL

CHARLES COUNTY, MD

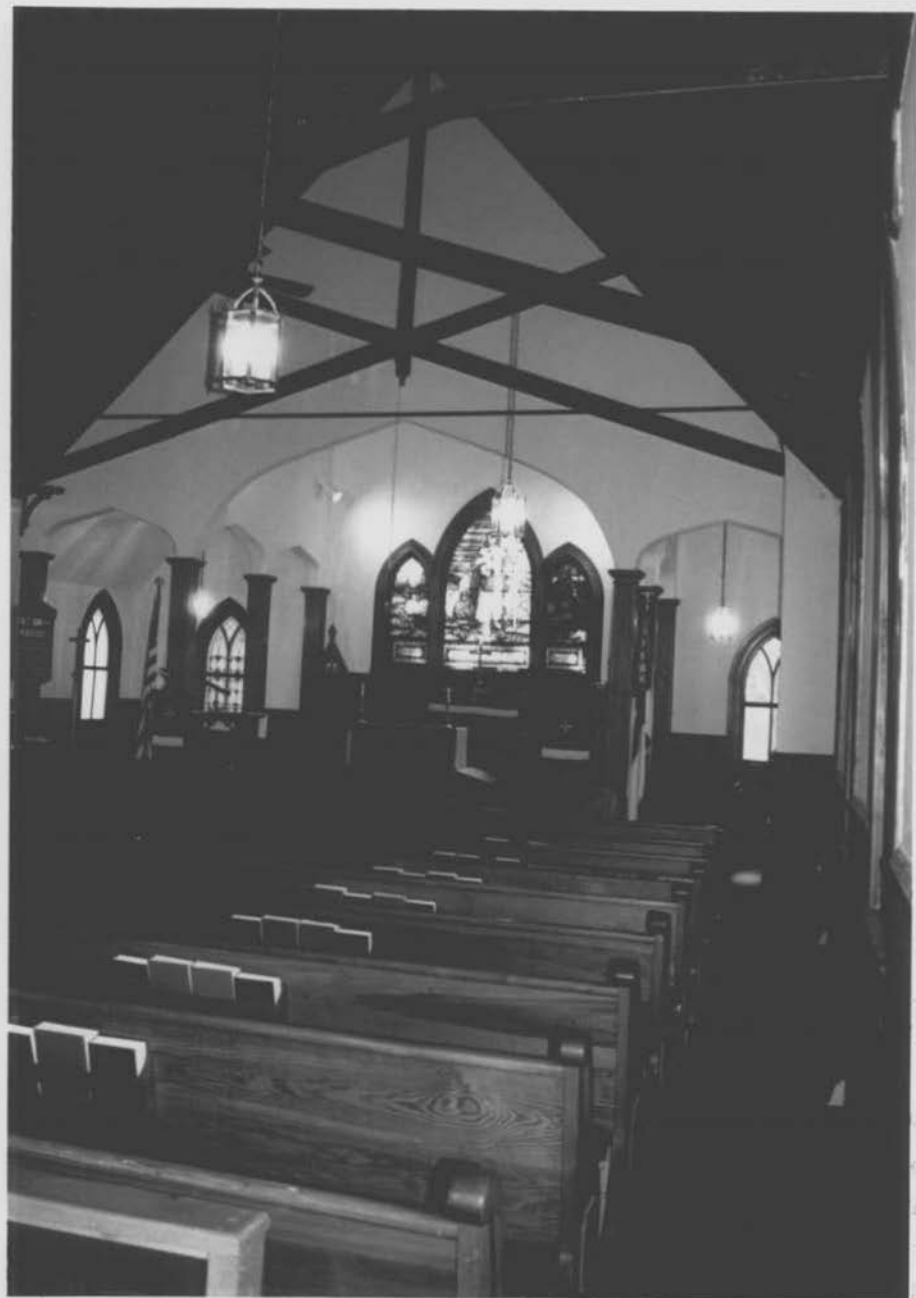
K.G. SMITH

9/98

MARYLAND SHPO

INTERIOR - LOOKING NW FROM CHANCEL

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CH-251

ST. JOHNS CHAPEL

CHARLES COUNTY, MD

K.G. SMITH

9/98

MARYLAND SHPO

INTERIOR - LOOKING EAST TO CHANCEL

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CH-251

ST. JOHNS CHAPEL

CHARLES COUNTY, MD

K.G. SMITH

9/98

MARYLAND SHPO

INTERIOR - CHANCEL LOOKING SE

6 OF 7



18CH251

St. John's Chapel

Charles County, Maryland

Photo by: J. Jones

Date: Sept. 1999

Location of orig.: Coastal Carolina Research, Tarboro, NC

Description: front view

2 of 26 this roll



18 Jul 251

St. John's Church

Charles County, Maryland

Photo by: J. Jones

Date: Sept. 1999

Location & Reg.: Coastal Carolina Research, Tarboro, NC

Description: front view