

Chapel Hill (80-018)

Chapel Hill is a rural African-American village that emerged in the late nineteenth century at the crossroads of Old Fort Road and Livingston Road in the Fort Washington area of Prince George's County. The small community is located approximately eight miles south of Washington, D.C. Indian Head Highway (Route 210) serves as the western boundary of Chapel Hill and the unincorporated community of Clinton is located to the east.

Before the Civil War (1861-1865), the area that would become Chapel Hill had been part of several antebellum plantations, which were situated on tracts of land known as "Boarman's Content" and "Frankland," belonging to the Hatton, Edelen, Thorne, and Gallahan families. The village's name most likely was derived from an early private Catholic chapel on the Frankland tract that was demolished by the end of the nineteenth century.¹ However, Martenet's map of 1861 does not document a church in the area, suggesting the building was already no longer extant.² The only above-ground reminders of the chapel are several headstones that still stand at the site.

In the late nineteenth century, Chapel Hill evolved around a schoolhouse and a Methodist meetinghouse. In 1868, the Freedmen's Bureau, which was established by Congress in 1865 to direct the construction, establishment and maintenance of schools and hospitals for former slaves, built a schoolhouse at the intersection of Old Fort Road and Livingston Road. The following year, John Butler, a Bureau field agent, reported that the school was very large and that Mary A. Davinger, the first teacher, had fifty-seven students who regularly attended. Parents of the students contributed fifty cents tuition every month to cover the teacher's boarding fees.³ Despite this early success, attendance suddenly dropped the following year and tuition fees could not be collected from the local residents. This difficulty was typical in an area where children were needed to help their parents who sharecropped on local farms. Thus, many children could not attend school until after the harvest. In spite of this challenge, the school remained open.⁴

The Hopkins map of 1878 documents the small Chapel Hill settlement. Chapel Hill Methodist Episcopal Church and several buildings are noted in the area. Interestingly, the school is not specified on the map.⁵ It was believed that the meetinghouse was constructed sometime between 1880 and 1883, when the two-acre parcel (with a meetinghouse noted in the deed) was legally conveyed to the trustees.⁶ However, its presence on the Hopkins map suggests it was constructed prior to 1878. Local residents noted on the Hopkins map included E.W. Young, James R. Edelin, Clagett Thorn, Jesse R. Edelin, Thomas White, and J. Brown.⁷

In the 1880s, several families of free blacks began to establish farms in the area. This rural village was a community comprised of a few close-knit families. Jeremiah Brown and his son-in law, Albert Owen Shorter, purchased several five-acre parcels from the Hatton family in 1887. Brown served as the pastor

¹ Susan G. Pearl, *Prince George's County African-American Heritage Survey*, 1996 (Upper Marlboro, MD: Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission, 1996), 92.

² Simon J. Martenet, "Atlas of Prince George's County, Maryland, 1861, Adapted from Martenet's Map of Prince George's County, Maryland" (Baltimore: Simon J. Martenet C.E., 1861).

³ Bianca P. Floyd, *Records & Recollections: Early Black History in Prince George's County, Maryland* (Upper Marlboro: M-NCPPC, 1989), 25, 45.

⁴ Floyd, *Records & Recollections*, 46-47.

⁵ G.M. Hopkins, "Atlas of Fifteen Miles Around Washington, Including the County of Prince George Maryland" (Philadelphia: G.M. Hopkins, C.E., 1878).

⁶ Pearl, *Prince George's County African-American Heritage Survey*, 92.

⁷ G.M. Hopkins, "Atlas of Fifteen Miles Around Washington, Including the County of Prince George Maryland" (Philadelphia: G.M. Hopkins, C.E., 1878).

of the Methodist church and also taught classes at the school. Other African-American families, including the Thomas, Calvert, Brooks, Coleman, Bowling, and Henson families, settled in the area by 1900 and were enumerated in that year's Federal Census. The census noted that most worked as farmers or as farm hands, others were laborers and gardeners. A significant number of the women were noted as working as domestic help.⁸

Throughout the first quarter of the twentieth century, most people in the small village of Chapel Hill continued to farm. Few worked in Washington, D.C. and at federal government offices, or held jobs at Fort Washington.⁹ African-Americans at Fort Washington worked as carpenters, bricklayers, stonemasons, wheelwrights, blacksmiths, cooks, domestic servants, and unskilled laborers.¹⁰

The 1920s marks the beginning of significant improvements in Chapel Hill and the establishment of a more permanent community. In 1922, a benevolent society lodge was built and offered financial support for members and served as a gathering place for community events.¹¹ Also that year, a new one-room Rosenwald-funded addition to the original schoolhouse was constructed. The Chapel Hill School remained open until the 1950s, when the children were transferred to Sojourner Truth School at Oxon Hill.¹² In 1927, the new Livingston Road was constructed, connecting Chapel Hill more directly to Broad Creek and Piscataway. By the late 1930s the Chapel Hill community was comprised of approximately 35 houses and several general stores in addition to the church, schoolhouse, and benevolent lodge. Chapel Hill had developed into a stable community of closely related families, albeit rural and small.¹³

Since the mid-twentieth century, the community has experienced growth with only remnants of the early African-American community left intact. The community remained largely rural in nature. In the 1970s, many Chapel Hill's earliest buildings were demolished as a result of road-widening projects. The original church was replaced in 1975 with a new building. The first two schoolhouses, the benevolent lodge, and many early dwellings were also demolished. Many of these buildings were replaced with commercial buildings and new single-family houses. In recent years, the rural area surrounding Chapel Hill has been improved with modern residential subdivisions. With these changes, traces of the early African-American community are hard to detect.

There are currently no designated Historic Sites or Resources in Chapel Hill.

Windshield Survey

A windshield survey of Chapel Hill was completed in January 2009. The survey area contains approximately 138 primary resources that range in age from ca. 1910 to the present. The majority of resources were constructed from ca. 1925 to ca. 1965. Buildings in Chapel Hill are predominately residential with scattered commercial development located throughout the village, but primarily at the intersection of Old Fort Road, Livingston Road, and Old Piscataway Road. The rural community also contains two churches and two cemeteries. Building forms include L-shaped plans, bungalows, minimal traditional, ranch houses, split-foyers, and split-levels. Buildings from the first quarter of the twentieth century in Chapel Hill are vernacular, while later buildings show the influence of popular architectural

⁸ 1900 United States Federal Census, Maryland, Prince George's County, Piscataway, District 95, sheet 5A-5B.

⁹ Pearl, *Prince George's County African-American Heritage Survey*, 93.

¹⁰ Chapel Hill Citizens Association, Inc., "Historical Brief Supporting Commentary Relative to the Sectional Map Amendment Comprehensive Rezoning Proposal for Subregion VII," August 1983, 9, n.p., located in the Planning Office Files at Maryland-National Capital Parks and Planning Commission.

¹¹ Susan G. Pearl, *Prince George's County African-American Heritage Survey*, 92.

¹² Floyd, *Records & Recollections*, 47.

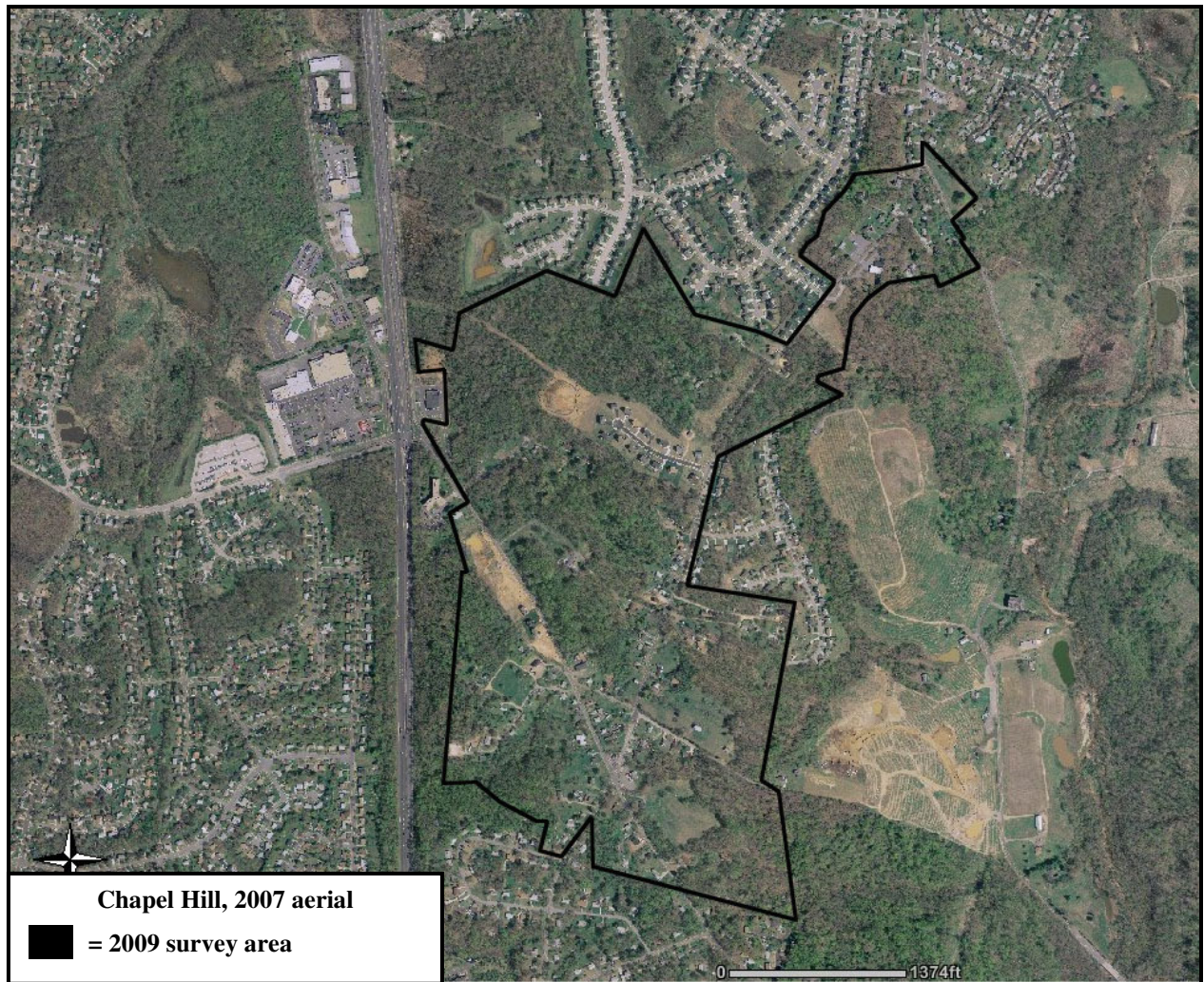
¹³ Pearl, *Prince George's County African-American Heritage Survey*, 93.

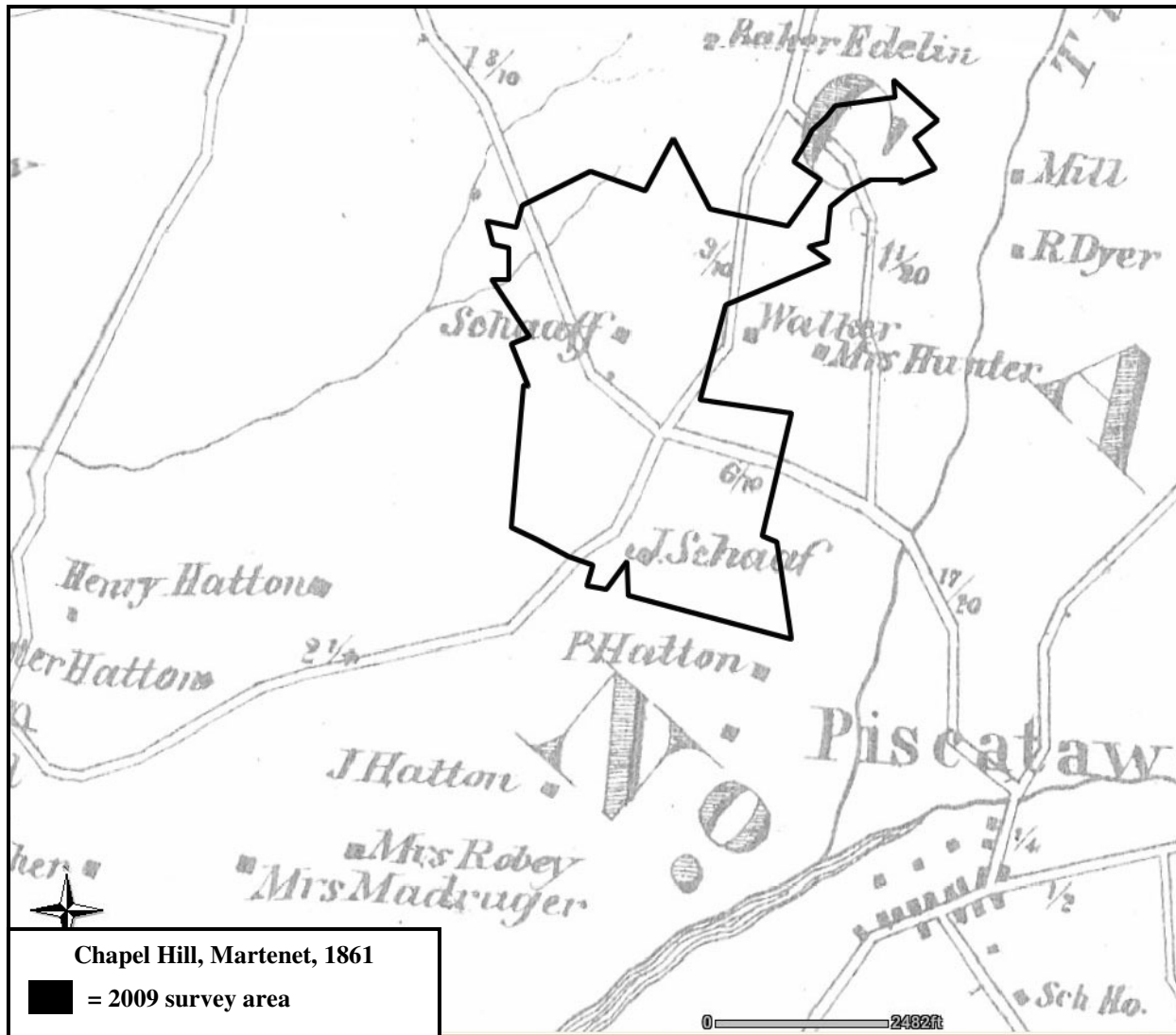
styles including Craftsman, Colonial Revival, Tudor Revival, and several illustrations from the Modern Movement. Chapel Hill is set on gently rolling hills and a large portion of the surrounding land is still heavily wooded, but threatened with new residential development. Buildings are located along Old Fort Road, Livingston Road, and Old Piscataway Road and sit on lots that vary in size from a quarter of an acre to several-acre parcels. Setbacks of the houses also vary; the earliest houses in Chapel Hill are typically located close to the road as a result of several road-widening projects in the late twentieth century.

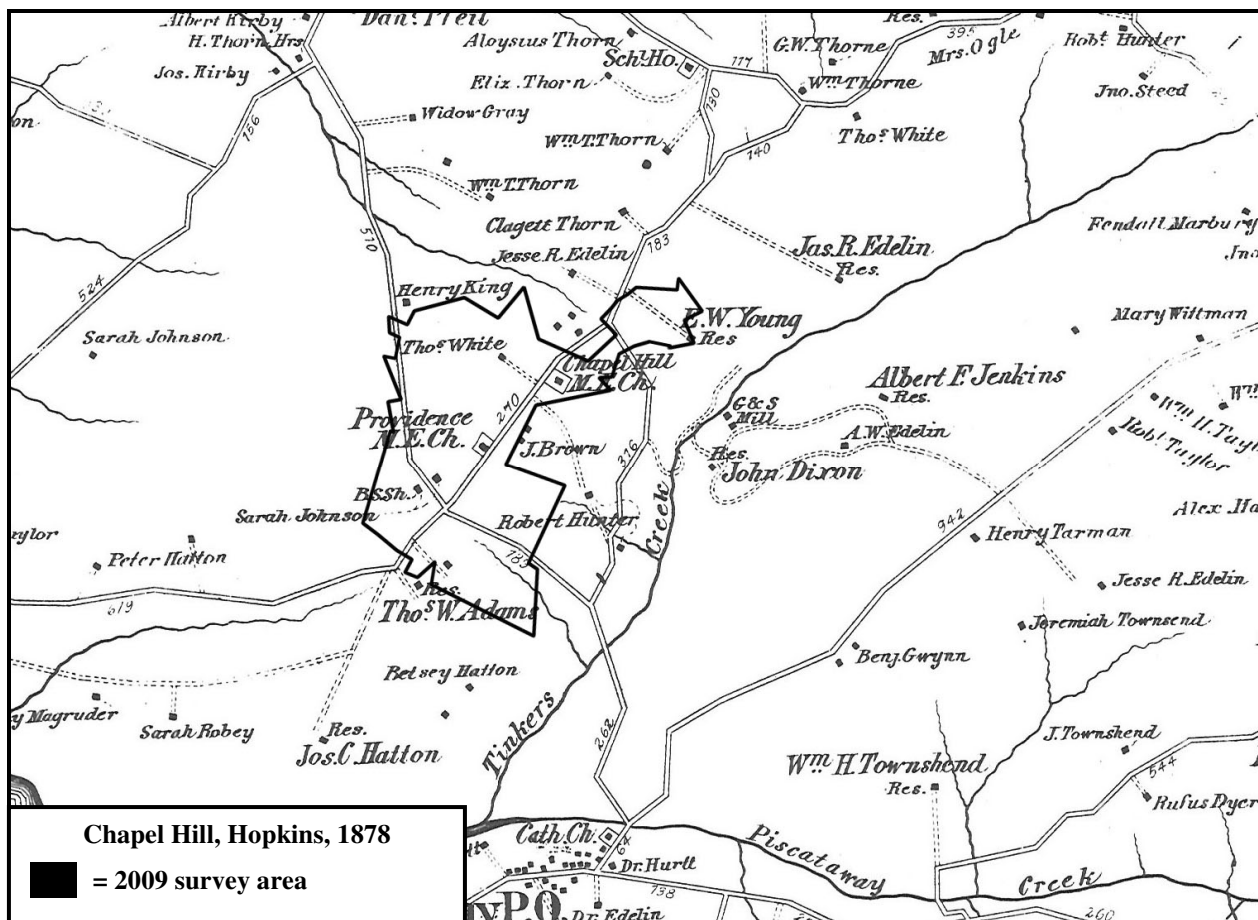
Historic District Evaluation

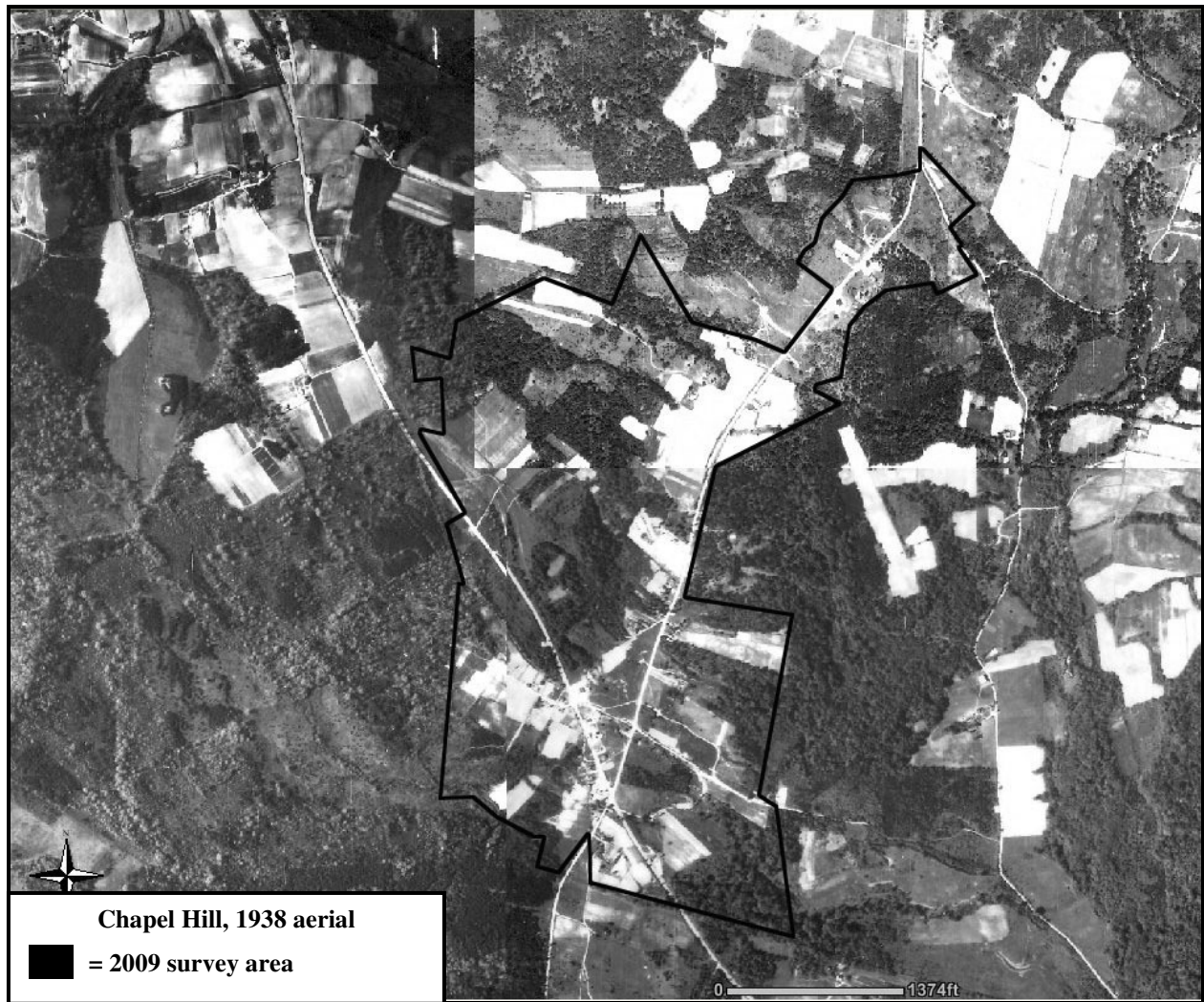
Chapel Hill represents several Prince George's County Heritage Themes including black history and residential architectural styles. The rural community is not recommended eligible for listing as either a Prince George's County or National Register historic district. Further, the community is not eligible under the National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form for African-American Historic Resources in Prince George's County, Maryland. The extant historic dwellings in Chapel Hill do not meet the requirements for listing as an African-American settlement. These requirements include the community having a surviving communal or institutional building (a church, social hall, school, or municipal building), at least 30% of the houses present during the period of significance of the district must survive, and the pattern of streets and size of original lots must be present. Despite its importance as a late-nineteenth-century African-American settlement and rural village, Chapel Hill no longer retains sufficient integrity to convey its significance. Almost all of the early buildings have been demolished, including a church, two schoolhouses, and many commercial buildings and houses. There does not appear to be any extant buildings in Chapel Hill that predate 1900 and document the community's initial settlement. The rural community evolved sporadically over time and the architectural styles, building forms, and patterns of development are all indicative of this evolution. An increasing number of new houses are being constructed in the area, which is still largely undeveloped. The recent resubdivision of property in the community has changed the size of the original lots. Chapel Hill's location adjacent to Indian Head Highway makes it vulnerable to further suburban development. Plat maps of the area indicate that new suburbs yet to be improved are located within the survey area in Chapel Hill and just to the east of the community. Many of the buildings have been altered with modern materials and insensitive additions and alterations that obscure the original style, form, and workmanship of the buildings. Chapel Hill no longer retains its integrity of setting, materials, feeling, location, or association.

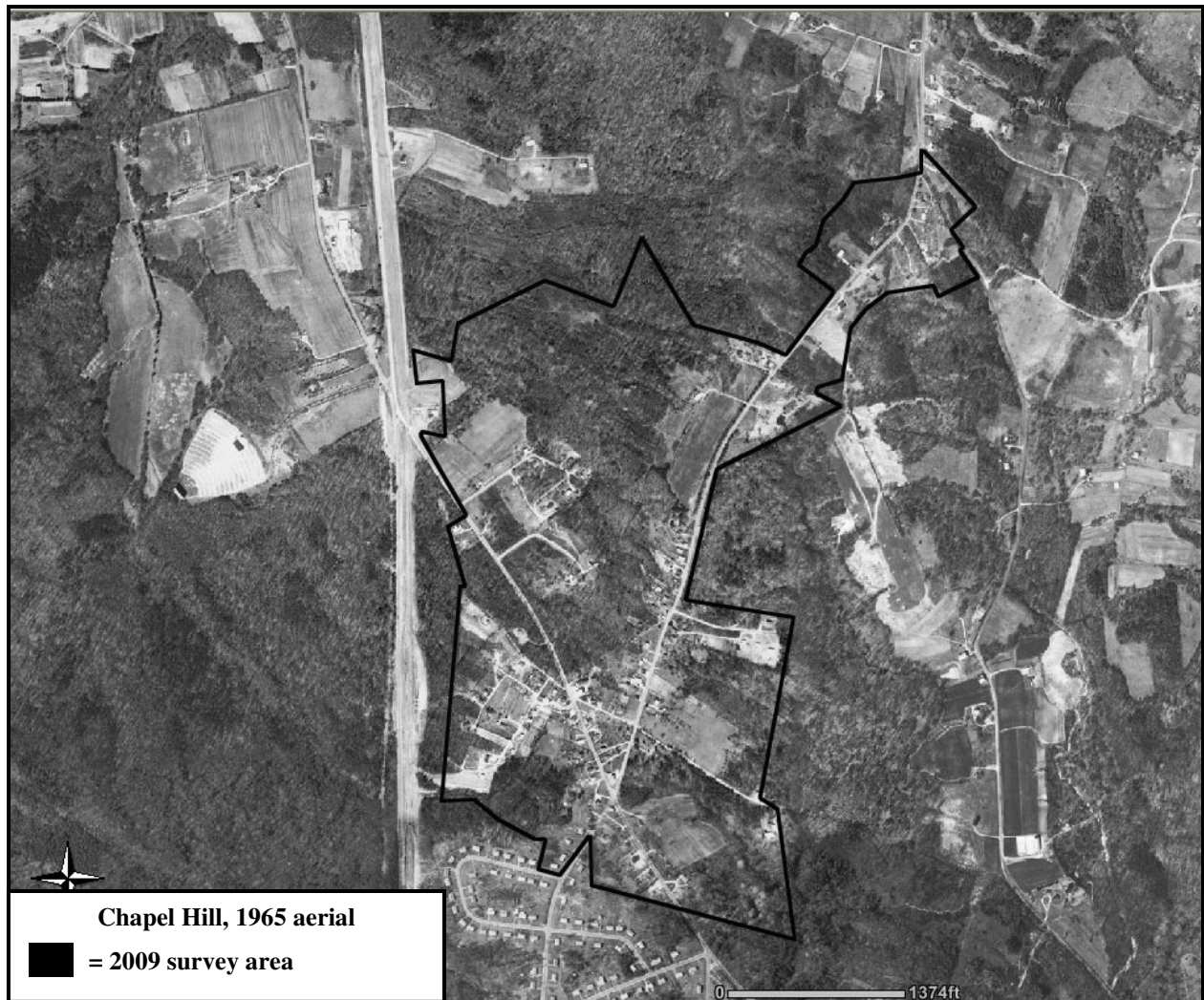
Prepared by EHT Tracerics, Inc.
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Looking north, Victory Deliverance Temple, 12300-12304 Livingston Road (*EHT Traceries*, 2009)



Looking northeast, 1404-1406-1414 Old Piscataway Road (*EHT Traceries*, 2009)



Looking north, 12309-12305-12301 Old Fort Road (*EHT Traceries*, 2009)



Looking northwest, Charles Ball House, 12127 Old Fort Road (*EHT Traceries*, 2009)



Looking north, 12123 (Lancaster House)-12105 Old Fort Road (*EHT Traceries*, 2009)



Looking northeast, 12104-12102 Old Fort Road, Jomar Acres (*EHT Traceries*, 2009)



Looking west, Chapel Hill Cemetery, 12000 block (odd) Old Fort Road (*EHT Traceries*, 2009)



Looking west, Chapel Hill Cemetery, 12000 block (odd) Old Fort Road (*EHT Traceries*, 2009)



Looking northwest, 1413-1411-1409-1407 Windjammer Court, Aragona Village (*EHT Traceries*, 2009)



Looking northeast, 11818-11816 Old Fort Road (*EHT Traceries*, 2009)



Looking northeast, Grace United Methodist Church and cemetery, 11700 Old Fort Road (*EHT Traceries*, 2009)



Looking northeast, 12500 Livingston Road (*EHT Traceries*, 2009)



Looking west, 12603 Livingston Road (*EHT Traceries*, 2009)



Looking west, 12509 Old Fort Road (*EHT Traceries*, 2009)



Looking northwest, 12409-12405 Livingston Road (*EHT Traceries*, 2009)