



Churches & Cemeteries

OUTSIDE DOCUMENTED COMMUNITIES



601 Eighth Street, Laurel

Built 1921

A landmark on the western edge of the City of Laurel, St. Mark's Church has a long history of significance to the local African-American community.

St. Mark's is a front-gabled church building with a corner entry tower. Constructed of rusticated concrete block, the north and south long walls of the nave are three bays long, lighted by gothic-arch windows separated by slim buttresses. The east gable front is lighted by a large tripartite stained-glass window, and the gable above it is covered with dark wood shingles. A two-story tower, with flared pyramidal roof and finial, is set into the northeast corner of the church building; entrance is into the east face of the tower through a pedimented porch with decorative posts of the same rusticated block.

A group of black Methodists had been worshipping in a small frame building owned by James Hebron, one of their number. In 1891, Hebron and two other men acquired from the Jenkins family of Montpelier a lot on the west side of Church (now Eighth) Street. The frame building, Hebron Hall, was then moved to the new lot where it stood across the street from the recently (1884) constructed Laurel Colored School. Together these two buildings became the nucleus of the black community of Laurel. In 1895, this church became part of the Laurel Charge of the Methodist Conference, and the same pastor served both St. Mark's and Queen's Chapel.

In 1921, a building program was undertaken, and construction began on a new church building. George Levi, a laborer experienced in masonry, is credited with molding the block with which the church was built. Before

construction began, Hebron Hall, which had served 30 years as the house of worship, was moved a short distance south on the east side of Eighth Street where it served as a social hall. Late in the 1940s, the congregation set up a building fund, and 30 years later the west addition was constructed, expanding the sanctuary and providing a pastor's study and fellowship hall.

St. Mark's has served an active congregation, largely because of the stable black community of Laurel, many members of which worked at the Laurel Mills or the Muirkirk Furnace. St. Mark's is significant not only because of its unusual appearance, but because it represents the religious center of a long-standing urban black community.

The Regional District Act (Article 28 of the Maryland Code) that provides the planning and zoning authority for The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission does not include the City of Laurel; therefore, this building is not a Prince George's County historic site.



69-21

Cherry Hill Cemetery

6821 Ingraham Street, Beacon Heights

Grave markers date from 1884

Historic site (M-NCPPC)

Cherry Hill is significant as a rare surviving example of a late-nineteenth-century burial ground for members of the local black community. It was once part of the farm that was amassed by Josiah Adams, who had been part of the labor force at the Riversdale plantation before the Civil War. Beginning in 1871, Adams began to purchase parcels of land that he developed into a farm of 49.5 acres. When Adams died in 1884, he divided the land into seven lots and devised them individually to some of his children. The largest lot was delineated around Josiah Adams' dwelling; in the southwest corner of that lot, Adams designated a small graveyard in which he was to be interred and which was devised to all of his children as a family burial ground. A large inscribed stone was erected in memory of Josiah Adams. In the years following Adams' death, many members of the Adams family and their relatives (e.g., Becketts, Plummers, Quinces, and Edwards) were buried in this graveyard; some of these burials were marked by chunks of sandstone, and others were unmarked.

Cherry Hill Cemetery is located on the east side of Ingraham Street in the subdivision of Beacon Heights. A 5.8-acre parcel was left undeveloped, and it comprises all that is known of the subject cemetery. The topography of this land is fairly steep, dropping 55 feet toward Furman Parkway to the east; the easterly section of the property is wooded. Chunks of sandstone, uninscribed, were once arranged in rows, marking the burials; most of these stones had been disturbed, and many lost, before the property was repossessed by the county and rehabilitation of the cemetery was undertaken. Since that time, a concrete bench has been installed at the high point of the land, several stones have been replicated or reset, and a park sign has been erected at the road frontage.

The property was sold in 1931 by Adams' granddaughter, but remained in the family. When the surrounding land was sold at the time of the 1955 subdivision, there was a verbal agreement that the cemetery would remain undisturbed, but the memorial stone for Josiah Adams has since disappeared. In the early 1990s the undeveloped 5.8-acre parcel was acquired by The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission, which has made it into a park-like setting with several memorial markers. The Cherry Hill Cemetery is now a peaceful oasis in a developed residential area, and a rare and important reflection of an early local black community.



72-45

Harmony Memorial Park

7101 Sheriff Road, Landover

Historic resource; established 1960 with burials dating from 1825

Harmony Memorial Park is a very large (historically African-American) cemetery, and contains approximately 64,000 graves. The Columbian Harmony Society was founded in 1825 in Washington, D.C., by a group of free Negroes, with its major objective to establish a dignified burial place for blacks. In 1829 the society purchased a tract of seven lots at 5th Street and Boundary Street (now Florida Avenue) in the District of Columbia. The cemetery which the society established there was known as “Harmonion.” In 1859 it was moved to a new site on Rhode Island Avenue, and the name was changed to “Harmony Cemetery.” The Rhode Island Avenue site was used for another century, when the cemetery was filled almost to capacity, and the society began to look for another location. Louis H. Bell, a Maryland real estate investor, offered land on Sheriff Road, and his proposal was accepted in 1959.

In May 1960 the society began the five-month process of removal and re-interment of 37,000 graves to the new site, reported to have been one of the largest cemetery moves in history. Although originated for the use of African-Americans, the Harmony Cemeteries have interred persons of many races, religions and nationalities. Harmony Memorial Park now has a generous care fund to ensure its beauty and upkeep in perpetuity. The Columbian Harmony Society, which established the original cemetery, continues its operations, not only in regard to the cemetery but also in research and publication on subjects of African-American interest.



75A-30

Lincoln Memorial Cemetery

4001 Suitland Road, Suitland

Historic resource;

Burials date from 1928

Lincoln Memorial Cemetery is a commercial, nonsectarian, privately owned African-American cemetery. It has approximately 51,000 graves. This cemetery was started in 1927 by James Easley Edmunds from Lynchburg, Virginia, for black residents of the Washington metropolitan area. It was developed on land which was part of the old Landon dairy farm. The park-like grounds were designed by landscape architect John H. Small of Washington,

D.C. The cemetery provided a dignified final resting place for African-Americans in an era when burial grounds for whites and African-Americans were segregated, and cemeteries were in short supply in the District. In the 1920s and 1930s, Lincoln Memorial was one of only two known public cemeteries for African-Americans located in the metropolitan area. The cemetery was apparently named to evoke positive associations with Abraham Lincoln, and the founding board included some of the most prominent African-American leaders in the District in the early twentieth century.

The most noticeable architectural feature of the cemetery is at the top of the hill, which has a view of the surrounding area. It is a small mausoleum in stylized classical temple form. In front of the temple opening is a bronze statue of the seated Bishop W. McCollough, a work of sculptor Ed Dwight in 1991. The inscription reads “Built in honor of Bishop W. McCollough by Bishop S. C. Madison. Successor to Bishop C. M. Grace, founder of United House of Prayer for all People Church on the rock of the Apostolic faith.”

The entrance to the cemetery from Suitland Road is through a wrought-iron archway with the legend “Lincoln Cemetery.” This archway opens onto a landscaped circle from which several roadways lead to the south and to higher ground.



**Bishop W. McCollough Mausoleum
at Lincoln Cemetery.**



74A-4

Holy Family Roman Catholic Church

12010 Woodmore Road, Woodmore

Historic site; built 1890

Holy Family is a large and well-proportioned church, with Gothic revival and stick-style decorative elements. It was built as a mission of Sacred Heart Church at Whitemarsh to serve the black Roman Catholic community of the rural Woodmore-Mitchellville area. This community had been worshipping earlier in a small log building known as Brookes Chapel. Isaac Wood, a local white carpenter whose family gave its name to

the Woodmore area, was a member of the Roman Catholic church at Whitemarsh, a predominantly white parish. Recognizing a need for a local Roman Catholic mission for the tenant farmers of the Woodmore community, Wood in 1889 deeded an acre of his Woodmore land to the Archdiocese of Baltimore “for the erection thereon of a church or chappel [sic].” On February 9, 1890, the parishioners themselves laid the cornerstone that began the construction of the Holy Family Mission. The church was completed in 1892. Holy Family Church was served by the Jesuit priests from Sacred Heart until 1938 when it was transferred to the care of the Josephites, whose primary work was ministering to the black community and better suited to address the religious needs of the parishioners. By 1938, the population of the mission had increased to such an extent that Holy Family was given resident parish status. With the recent development in this area of residential subdivisions, the congregation of Holy Family has become an even mix of black and white families. Since 1972, it has been pastored by the Diocese of Washington and has been maintained in excellent condition.

The church is a large, five-bay-long, front-gabled structure with German wood siding and a steeply pitched roof. Entrance is through two gabled porches at the south gable front; each porch has a double door surmounted by a gothic-arch transom with rosette tracery. Stick-style motifs with pendants adorn the apex of the south gable front, as well as those of the two entrance porches. High in the gable front is a small round window, also with rosette tracery, and between the entry porches is a tripartite, lancet window. Standing at the ridge of the south gable front is a tall bellcote with stick-style ornamentation and pyramidal roof surmounted by a cross. Each of the long walls of the nave is lighted by five gothic-arch windows. The interior of the church is distinguished by its wood-paneled, vaulted ceiling with exposed roof trusses. Holy Family Roman Catholic Church is an outstanding example of late-Victorian ecclesiastic architecture. It is particularly significant as the substantial and lasting product of African-American Roman Catholics in a rural agricultural community.

74B-6

Carroll Methodist Episcopal Chapel

1811 Mitchellville Road, Mitchellville

Historic site; built c. 1900

Carroll Methodist Episcopal Church is a simple frame chapel of meetinghouse style, representative of modest country churches of the turn of the twentieth century. Now nearly surrounded by modern residential development, it still offers a glimpse of the local black community of an earlier period.

Known now as Carroll Chapel, this building is front-gabled and of wood frame construction. Entrance is through a double door in the small gabled vestibule at the south gable front. The sides of the church are three bays long; windows are rectangular and may always have been in this form. The original board siding is now covered with white synthetic siding. The roof is covered with standing-seam metal. The interior walls are finished with beaded wainscoting.

In 1877, the white congregation of McKendree Chapel made plans to replace their church, constructed in 1841. The McKendree trustees deeded the old chapel to five black trustees of the Methodist Episcopal Church. The black congregation did not, however, move into the old chapel, but one month later purchased a half acre of property a short distance west of McKendree Chapel. Members of the congregation believe that the present chapel was built soon after this; the building appears to be of early twentieth-century construction, although it may well contain elements of the 1870s structure. Certainly a chapel for the black Methodist community of Mitchellville did exist as early as 1877, for it is mentioned in an 1877 record of the Marlboro Circuit (which included, in addition to this congregation, those of Union Chapel in Upper Marlboro, Niles Church at Meadows, and Brooks Church at Nottingham). This 1877 report was recorded by Pastor O. Carroll, and it is probably in his honor that the chapel was named.

In 1920/30 a Rosenwald school for black children was built a short distance west on Mitchellville Road; together the two buildings helped to define the community. By the 1960s membership was decreasing as many congregants joined the larger Mount Oak Methodist Church a few miles to the northeast. In recent years the building has been used by a small Baptist congregation. Carroll Chapel, with its simple plan and rectangular sash windows, has the appearance of a schoolhouse rather than a church. It is representative, though, of many other modest country churches of the twentieth century (most of which have been either modified or destroyed) and therefore has significance in this still-semirural community.



74B-10

Mount Nebo African Methodist Episcopal Church & Cemetery

17214 Queen Anne Road, Queen Anne

Historic site; built 1925

The old Mount Nebo A.M.E. Church was built to replace an earlier church building. In June 1877, one acre from the Plummer family's Poplar Ridge tract was sold to three black men of the Queen Anne area; these men (Richard Wood, George W. Larkins, and Wilson Turner) were acting as trustees for the African Methodist Episcopal Church and the land was to be "for the use of the African Methodist Church and as a burial ground for colored persons." The one-acre lot adjoined the recently (1875) completed school for black children of the Queen Anne vicinity. A small log church was completed within a few years, and together with the schoolhouse, became a focal point for the local black community.

The old Mount Nebo African Methodist Episcopal Church is a one-story, front-gabled church building of wood frame construction, typical of the small meetinghouses of the early twentieth century. Centered in the south gable front of the building is a small entry tower with pyramidal roof. Entrance is in its south face through a paneled double door. There is a rear addition that extends the sanctuary to a fourth bay, and turns to form a shallow ell wing. Northwest of the church is a small graveyard bordered by woods.

Both school and church fronted on the old road between Upper Marlboro and Queen Anne. A century earlier Queen Anne had been a thriving commercial port town, but by the late 1870s it was a quiet river crossing with a few stores and dwellings, and a significant black and biracial population. One of the most prominent residents of Queen Anne, William Lane Watkins, is closely associated with the Mount Nebo church and school. Watkins was born in 1852, son of an enslaved woman and a white father; he was educated in Massachusetts and received a medical degree from Boston University. He returned to Prince George's County in the late 1870s and married a daughter of Wilson Turner, one of the trustees of Mount Nebo A.M.E. Church. Watkins practiced medicine in the Queen Anne area and taught school at the Queen Anne school (located next to Mount Nebo Church). He was also active in local politics, serving on the Republican State Central Committee for several years, before his death in 1929.



76B-8

St. Paul's Methodist Episcopal Church

6634 St. Barnabas Road, Oxon Hill

Historic resource; built 1915

St. Paul's Methodist Episcopal Church is significant for its long history of Methodist worship in the local African-American community. The church is now part of a large multisection complex that incorporates a small frame church structure as its northeasternmost element; this small church is representative of the modest frame churches of this period.

The church is front-gabled, three bays by four, with pointed-arch windows filled with stained-glass memorials; entry is through a three-story tower built into the northeast corner. The church building is sheathed with synthetic siding. Immediately west of the tower, set into the foundation, is an inscribed cornerstone that reads: "This cornerstone was removed from the original 1888 church structure and affixed to the 1915 foundation."

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St. Paul's may be the oldest black congregation in Prince George's County. As early as 1791, traveling clerics preached to a group of African-Americans who had obtained their freedom and built a meeting house for worship. This group of people may be connected to a congregation of African-Americans who, by 1867, were worshipping together in a schoolhouse provided by the Freedmen's Bureau. In 1887 this congregation acquired land on which to build their own church, just over a mile southeast (inland) from the Freedmen's Bureau schoolhouse; a Methodist meetinghouse was constructed in 1888 at the location where the parish hall now stands, and served until 1915 when the present sanctuary was built next to it. The 1888 church was destroyed in the 1920s, its place taken by a series of later additions. St. Paul's has made the transition from a struggling rural congregation at the end of the Civil War to an urban middle-class congregation of the twenty-first century. Although the building retains little of its historic appearance, its background is unusually important in the history of African-Americans in the county. Its congregation may well reach back to the 1790s, and may be the first documented African-American congregation in Prince George's County.



St. Paul's Church today.

76B-16

Mount Hope African Methodist Episcopal Church Site & Cemetery

7043 Allentown Road, Camp Springs

Historic site, 1891–1962

This is the site of a late nineteenth-century church, one of a small number of historic African Methodist Episcopal Churches in the county. Although the church building has been gone for more than 40 years, the graveyard remains a quiet oasis. The graveyard is bordered by a shallow wooded area, and only a few inscribed stones are visible in the grassy area.

In 1891, a local farm owner sold two acres to three local black men (David Reeder, Henry T. Mills, and James E. Young) who were serving as “trustees of a certain colored Methodist Church,” for the purpose of “erecting thereon a house for public worship.” Within a few years a small church was built and came to be known as Mount Hope African Methodist Episcopal Church. It became part of a circuit with two already established churches: Union-Bethel A.M.E. Church near Brandywine and Metropolitan A.M.E. Church in Clinton; these three churches were served by the same pastor.

In 1902, the Board of School Commissioners responded to the request of the black community of Camp Springs and authorized that a school for black children be built. Following a pattern that had been established during the era of the Freedmen’s Bureau, a partnership developed between church and school; in this case, a school site was selected near an established black church, Mount Hope. In 1924, at the time of the building of the second school at Camp Springs, the trustees of Mount Hope (Jeremiah Bruce, John Dodson and John H. Wright) gave permission for the school children to use the two-acre churchyard as a playground. This partnership ended in 1954 when the school was closed and sold the following year.



St. Luke's Methodist Episcopal Church Site & Cemetery

Dower House Road West & Leapley Road, Upper Marlboro

Historic site; 1893–1970s

A wood frame chapel called St. Luke's Methodist Episcopal Church was established in 1877 on this site and stood until the late 1970s; today only the graveyard remains. In 1967, the St. Luke's congregation merged with the Jackson Methodist Church in Forestville, and in 1968 moved into the newly constructed Westphalia United Methodist Church, located on Westphalia Road.

In the period following the Civil War, there was a small community of black farmers south of Centreville, a small crossroads village on the then-developing Washington-Marlborough Turnpike. In 1867, the Freedmen's Bureau established a school for black children in this community. William Niles, a local white farmer, deeded one acre to four men as trustees "for the erection thereon of a school house for the use of the blacks forever" to be located on the Niles farm near Centreville. An unusual detail of the deed specified land for playgrounds as well; the school opened in 1868. A decade passed before a church was built in this community, but, as was the general pattern during this period, worship services were probably held in the schoolhouse until the church building was completed. In 1877, three black trustees of the Methodist Episcopal Church purchased 3/4 acre of land, approximately 1/4 mile northwest of the schoolhouse, for the purpose of erecting a house of public worship. The chapel was completed before June 1877 when Pastor Carroll of the Marlboro Circuit recorded Niles Chapel as one of his four churches. Named for the original benefactor of the school property, the Niles Chapel was probably a modest log structure; it was replaced in 1893 by a frame structure of typical front-gabled form.

Meadows grew up around Niles Chapel and the old schoolhouse. Early in the twentieth century, a lodge (or "colored hall") was constructed a short distance south of the church. By 1928 the old schoolhouse was in need of replacement, and the Board of Education purchased for that purpose two acres between the lodge and the church. Constructed with Rosenwald funds, the Meadows school (Colored School 2 in Election District 9) was completed in 1929. This complex of buildings (the new Rosenwald school, the social hall and the Methodist church) was the center of the Meadows community.

Meadows was short-lived, for in August 1942, in a Declaration of Taking, several thousand acres were acquired for the building of the Camp Springs Army Air Field (Joint Base Andrews Naval Air Facility Washington). Many families were required to vacate their homes and farms; at Meadows, the school and lodge were destroyed, and the congregation diminished in size. Services continued to be held at St. Luke's until the completion of the Westphalia church in 1968.



11301 Crain highway, Cheltenham

Historic site; active from 1887–1937

In 1872, Enoch Pratt, a Baltimore businessman and philanthropist, purchased a 1,200-acre tract in Cheltenham as a place to which delinquent African-American boys of Baltimore could be sent for rehabilitation. Pratt and his wife, Maria, immediately conveyed 752 acres to the House of Reformation and Instruction for Colored Children. The institution was opened in January of 1873. The 1878 Hopkins Map notates the “House of Reformation” with General John Watts Horn acting as superintendent. The first boys, thirteen in total, were housed in buildings associated with the 752-acre parcel donated by Pratt in 1872. The first institutional buildings were constructed shortly thereafter. The facility originally operated more like a school than a prison. The boys worked the school farm and lived in dormitories, rather than cells. Recaning chairs was a specialty of the facility. The first superintendent, John Watts Horn, born 1834 in Dumfries, Scotland, was a Maryland veteran of the Civil War (1861–1865). Horn fervently protested the policy of placing black children in prison, and after retiring from the military with the rank of general, turned his attention to the improvement of black youth. In 1937, the institution was taken over by the State of Maryland. The land on which the Boys' Village cemetery is located was conveyed to the Cheltenham State Veterans Commission in 1976 for use as a veterans' cemetery. It is likely that the Boy's Village of Maryland Cemetery was included with this transaction because the property would be developed into a new cemetery. The Cheltenham State Veterans Cemetery is currently active, while the Boys' Village of Maryland Cemetery is not. The cemetery is divided in two sections. Section One dates from the late-nineteenth



A marker from Section One.

century and was possibly established during Horn's tenure. This small section is located southwest of the cemetery maintenance building, approximately fifty feet from the tree line. The four identified granite headstones are arranged in one row aligned north to south. All of the markers have a segmental arch. Three of the headstones are legible. The marker leaning against a mature oak reads: Williams Jones / From Baltimore City / Died March 10, 1887 / Aged 17 Years. The short marker with footstone reads: Anthony Johnson / From Baltimore Co / Died March 21, 1880 / Aged 11 Years. The short marker, without footstone, reads: Ashbury Brown / From Annapolis, Md / Died April 5, 1887 / Aged 15 Years. The ages of these markers, and the inscriptions indicating that two of the boys were from Baltimore, suggests that this was the original

cemetery associated with the Boy's Village of Maryland. These were young men, the same age as the boys detained in the reformation facility. Depressions in the ground along the line of extant markers suggest the presence of additional burials that are no longer marked. Section Two, which includes the concrete-block markers, was established during the period of ownership by the state. This section is located northwest of the cemetery administration building, approximately fifty feet from the tree line. Section 2 is sited southwest of Section 1. There are approximately eight rows of markers aligned southwest to northeast. The double-corner, concrete-block markers are composed of large aggregate and protrude from the ground approximately five inches. None of the markers have inscriptions. Many of the markers have settled into the ground, making their identification impossible without excavation. Likewise, some

markers have deteriorated completely due to the effects of exposure to water. Although the markers appear to date from the early twentieth century, this does not confirm when the burials took place. The concrete blocks could have replaced earlier markers or were placed as an afterthought—they are all the same form and material. It is unlikely that the approximately 100 people buried here all died at the same time. The names of those buried in Section 2 remain unknown.



84-14

Asbury Methodist Episcopal Church & Cemetery

4004 Accokeek Road, Accokeek vicinity

Historic resource, built 1906

Asbury Methodist Episcopal Church is a large, white frame building and has a long history of significance in this rural area of southern Prince George's County. The history of Asbury Church begins in 1876, when one-and-one-half acres of farmland were deeded to three black trustees of the Methodist Episcopal Church. A small chapel was built soon after

this, but was replaced in 1906 by a larger frame church with a handsomely shingled bell tower.

Asbury Church is a front-gabled building of wood-frame construction, with a tall entry tower centered in its south gable front. The sides of the church are five bays long, lighted by gothic-arch windows; two similar windows flank the tower at the south gable

front. With the exception of the tower above the first story, the original wood siding is covered with white aluminum siding. The tower is highlighted by three courses of patterned shingles, rising to a steep flared pyramidal roof supported by molded brackets. A one-story brick addition extends eastward from the north section of the

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nave, enclosing the fifth bay on the east elevation.

In 1958, the church building was rebuilt and enlarged, but the bell tower was carefully preserved. The brick wing was added in 1974. The cornerstone in the southeast corner of the foundation records the important dates in the physical development of the church: *1876/Asbury M.E. Church/1958 July 1906.*

There is a cemetery west of the church with many old stones representing local families of long standing. The church and grounds have been maintained through the years by a substantial local black population. There are approximately 80 marked graves and an unknown number of unmarked graves. The markers are in rows and appear grouped by families. The oldest markers lie immediately west of the church. The form, size, and materials of the markers

vary widely, and include concrete and marble tablets, granite headstones (some with footstones), concrete crosses, wooden crosses, pieces of slate, concrete columns, and edge markers. Some of the family plots are delineated with marble footstones. Located throughout the cemetery are numerous grave depressions. The grave markers are a mix of the manufactured and handmade. Family names appearing frequently on the markers include Brooks, Moore, Pinkney, Sharp, and Duckett.

85A-18

*Union-Bethel African Methodist
Episcopal Church & Cemetery*

6810 Floral Park Road, Brandywine

Historic resource; built 1955

Two church structures stand on the property of the original Union-Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church, organized in the period after the Civil War. This has been the site of three separate phases of the church history beginning in the 1870s. Today, the large church complex stands in a rural area west of Brandywine, on grounds bordered by woods and including a graveyard north and west of the church.

The 1955 church is a front-gabled, brick building with a projecting entry tower centered in the south gable front. Slim brick buttresses separate the round-arch windows which light the long sides of the church; two similar round-arch windows flank the tower on the south gable front, and a smaller round-arch window surmounted by a cross-shaped opening lights the tower above the double door. The church surface is covered with stucco except for the buttresses and the quoin-like trim around the door and windows.

In 1868, Jane P. Williams deeded two acres to the trustees of the African Methodist Episcopal Church. The first church was built soon afterwards (it appears on an 1878 map of the area) and it may have been rebuilt or replaced in 1887; it was a front-gabled building of wood frame construction, with entrance in the south gable front. In 1900, an adjoining piece of land was purchased and the graveyard was extended to the west. By 1906, plans were being made for enlarging the church. The Baltimore Conference minutes of that year indicate considerable growth in the congregation under



the Reverend Joseph Cordell: “This is one of the best circuits within the bounds of our conference. It is growing so rapidly in population that it will in a short time demand the entire services of a pastor. The church building is inadequate to accommodate the people...therefore the pastor and members are collecting funds to enlarge the building.”

Soon after this, a bell tower was built at the southeast corner of the church, and entrance to the nave was changed to the east face of the tower; the original entrance was replaced by a double pointed-arch window. An east wing was also constructed, enlarging the usable space. This frame church was destroyed by fire on New Year’s Day 1948, leaving only the basement intact. Services were held in this basement space for several years while the congregation raised money to finance the rebuilding; the new church was completed in 1955. In 1962, Mount Hope (in Camp Springs) and Metropolitan (in Clinton) A.M.E. Churches were closed, and their congregations merged with that of Union-Bethel. The expanded congregation of Union-Bethel grew steadily, and by 1988 plans were underway to construct a larger church building. This modern building was completed in 1991, and is connected to the 1955 church by one of its low wings.



86A-13

St. Mary's Methodist Episcopal Church Site and Cemetery

South side of Croom Airport Road, east of Route 382

Historic site, 1918–1965

This is the site of an early-twentieth-century chapel building that served the black Methodist population of the Croom area for more than 50 years. The church building no longer stands, but a small cemetery is still maintained on the property.

The chapel, built in 1911, was a small front-gabled meetinghouse-style building, of wood frame construction, with entrance through the principal (north) gable front. Three pointed-arch windows lighted each of the long sides of the nave, and the north entrance was flanked by similar windows. A triangular transom surmounted the double door, and above the door, the upper gable was embellished with saw-tooth shingles and a diamond-shaped loft-level window.

A meetinghouse two miles inland from Nottingham on the Patuxent had served the black Methodist population of the Croom-Nottingham area since the period immediately following the Civil War. By the end of the nineteenth century, however, the African-American residents of Croom began to seek the establishment of a chapel in their vicinity. In 1900, a 1.38-acre parcel on the north edge of Croom was acquired by four black men as trustees of the Methodist Episcopal Church. For some years, services were held in a small log structure, until the wood frame chapel was completed in 1911. Named St. Mary's, this congregation was always closely associated with the Brooks Methodist Episcopal Church, located less than a mile south of Croom. The same minister served both churches.

In the late 1960s, St. Mary's Church was destroyed by fire and its congregation joined Brooks-Myers Church. The small cemetery on the former grounds of St. Mary's has thus become the property of Brooks-Myers Church, which continues to use and maintain it. The tranquil and beautiful site is bordered by woods on two sides and is a quiet reminder of an important historic gathering place for African Americans.

86B-01

Gibbons Methodist Episcopal Church Site & Education Building

14107 Gibbons Church Road, Brandywine

Historic site; education building c. 1920

This is the location of a black Methodist church of the late-nineteenth century; on its site is a brick church of the 1960s, a graveyard and an education building of the 1920s.

In 1887, James H. S. Gibbons, a prosperous white farmer and

member of Immanuel Methodist Church at Baden, deeded one acre of land near Brandywine to Nathaniel Scott, John Briscoe, Samuel Fleet, William Pinkney, and John Green, as trustees of the Methodist Episcopal Church. These five black men were members of Brooks Methodist Church near Nottingham, but

wished to build a new church closer to their Brandywine dwellings. In 1889, they erected a small frame church on the newly acquired land; in honor of the grantor, it was called Gibbons Methodist Episcopal Church. The church was typical of the rural chapels of that era: a modest gabled building of wood frame

construction, with a small entry tower and porch. The church was remodeled in 1916; then in the 1920s, the small frame social/education building was erected.

In 1929 a new schoolhouse was built directly across the road from Gibbons Church, its construction

supported by Rosenwald funds. Before this time, African-American children of the Brandywine area had attended school a short distance to the northwest, but with the building of the Rosenwald school, the location of these two institutions, Gibbons Church and Brandywine

School, became a focal point for the African-American population in this area. In the 1960s, a building program was initiated for the purpose of replacing the 1889 church building. A brick church was completed in 1968, and the Victorian chapel was demolished.



The social/education building is a small building of wood frame construction. It is one story high and L-shaped, sided with plain horizontal board, with an entrance in the east gable front. To the west of this building is the graveyard.



Nottingham-Myers Church is shown here in a May 1983 photograph in its original configuration. An addition has since been built onto the south elevation.

86B-05

Nottingham-Myers Methodist Episcopal Church & Cemetery

15601 Brooks Church Road

Historic site; built 1939

The main block of this church was built in 1939, but it was preceded by earlier structures on the site. In 1867, John H. Skinner, a prominent landowner in the Nottingham area, deeded one acre of his Mansfield Farm to five black trustees for the purpose of establishing a Methodist church and a schoolhouse. A small log meeting house was soon constructed, built by the local families with materials provided by the Freedmen's Bureau. This building served not only as the first schoolhouse for black children in the area, but as a place of worship that came to be known as Brooks Church in honor of one of the original trustees. The log building was replaced by a frame structure, completed in 1889. The main block of the present church was built during the pastorate of Frederick Myers. The Reverend Myers supervised the construction of the building, which was carried out by members of the congregation. In honor of the pastor, the church was renamed Brooks-Myers Methodist Episcopal Church. A south addition was completed late in 1983, adding a choir/conference room and pastor's study.

Now known as Nottingham-Myers, this church is significant not only for its architecture, but also for its important place in the religious and education history of African-Americans in rural southern Prince George's County.

87A-10

St. Thomas Methodist Episcopal Church & Cemetery

18810 Aquasco Road, Baden

Historic site; built 1911

St. Thomas Methodist Church is typical of the rural chapels of the turn of the twentieth century. It stands on the site of the Freedmen's Bureau school and church that were established after the Civil War. For more than a century this complex was a focal point of the black community in the Baden-Aquasco area.

St. Thomas Church is a small front-gabled building of wood frame construction, with a small entry vestibule at its west gable front; the entrance into this vestibule has a gothic-arch transom. The nave is three bays long, lighted by gothic-arch windows with tracery. The building is covered with plain horizontal wood siding. In the foundation at the southwest corner of the nave is a cornerstone which reads: "St. Thomas M.E. Church A.D. 1911." Along the north side of the unpaved entrance drive is a graveyard bordered by woods on the north and west.

In 1867, local farmer George Orme deeded one acre to eight black trustees of the Methodist Episcopal Church "for the use of the congregation of the said church and for a free school." Under the auspices of the Freedmen's Bureau, construction was completed in 1868. The

building was used for both Methodist services and for classes, until 1878 when a school building (Colored School 2 in Election District 8) was completed. From this time on, the 1868 building was used for Methodist services until it was replaced in 1911. At that time, during the tenure of the Reverend Robert F. Coates (1908-1920), the present building was erected just west of the original structure, and the old building was torn down.

The new church was typical of rural chapels of the meetinghouse style, with its gabled entry vestibule (or narthex) and gothic-arch windows. A rear addition was built in 1963, providing an altar space flanked by pastor's study and choir loft. In just a decade, however, regular use of the enlarged church came to an

end; the decreasing size of the congregation led to its merging with John Wesley Methodist Episcopal Church on the south side of Aquasco. The combined congregation is now known as Christ United Methodist Church and worships at the John Wesley Church.

St. Thomas Methodist Church is similar to several others of its period and type (e.g., Carroll Chapel, Ross Memorial and Ridgely). St. Thomas retains much of its original fabric; unlike others of its type, its gothic-arch windows have not been replaced by modern rectangular windows, and its board siding has not been covered by synthetic material. St. Thomas is now in seriously deteriorating condition, but it is significant both architecturally and historically.



Schools

OUTSIDE DOCUMENTED COMMUNITIES



71A-16

Collington Rosenwald School

5201 Church Road, Collington

Historic resource; built 1927



ABOVE: The Collington School in 1927 and
BELOW, the building today.



The Collington School is a two-classroom building, typical of the larger rural schools built during the late 1920s under the Rosenwald program. The first school for black children in this area was constructed in 1875. Having originally only one room, this schoolhouse was gradually enlarged and extended. In 1924, when this building was serving an overflow group of 100 students, the Colored Public School Trustees reported that this was one of the oldest school buildings in the county, and that, although the students' parents were much attached to the old building and did not like to contemplate "abandoning the house where they sat in school," a larger Rosenwald school should be sought. The local population petitioned the Board of Education for a new and larger schoolhouse; one acre of land immediately west of the old schoolhouse was purchased with money raised by the community, and the Rosenwald fund contributed to construction of the building.

The Collington School is a one-story building with hipped roof. The original wood siding is now covered with gray synthetic shingle; the foundation is of decorative molded concrete block. Originally each classroom was lighted by a bank of five windows across the west facade, as shown in the c. 1927 photograph. From the recessed entryway, doors led north and south into the two large classrooms. The central section of the building, accessible from both classrooms, served as a kitchen. A central projection in the rear provided a cloakroom for each classroom.

The new Collington School (Colored School 2 in Election District 7) opened in 1927, its plan typical of the Rosenwald-funded schoolhouses of this period. The new school served seven grades in two large classrooms and offered its students substantial improvements over the older school building. It operated as a public school for less than 25 years, closing before 1952. At that time, the schoolhouse was sold to the Roman Catholic Church, and the priests of Holy Family Roman Catholic Church in Woodmore used it as the location for religious instruction for the local black Roman Catholic community. In the 1960s, the school building was sold to the present owner, who converted it into two apartments.



72-02

Highland Park Rosenwald School

6501 Lowland Drive, Highland Park

Historic site; built 1928

The Highland Park School is now part of a larger school complex, but it has considerable significance in the history of black education in the county. The original structure, with Colonial Revival-style decorative details, is a good example of an architect-designed school building. It was built in the same year as the Community High School in Lakeland, and these two schools became the county's second and third high schools for African-American students.

The original Highland Park School, built in 1928, is a large, brick, hip-roof building; an arched entrance is centered in the main (east) façade, in a projecting frontispiece surmounted by a shaped parapet. Built into a hillside, the building stands on a high foundation which encloses a full story below grade. This original structure now constitutes the northernmost wing of a larger building complex formed by successive additions.

This school was a focal point in the streetcar suburb of Highland Park. The county's first black high school was established in Upper Marlboro in 1921–22 to serve the southern part of the county. In 1927, plans were made to build two more high schools, partially supported by the Rosenwald fund; the high schools at Lakeland and Highland Park were completed the following year. Designs for the two schools were prepared by the architectural firm of Linthicum and Linthicum of Raleigh, North Carolina. Community High School at Lakeland was to serve students from the northwestern portion of the county, and the Highland Park School was to serve students from the north-central area.

The Highland Park School opened with seven teachers, serving all grades from first through twelfth. It served secondary-level students until the Fairmont Heights High School opened in 1950; after that it served as a junior high school and elementary school. Additions were constructed in 1949, 1958, and 1965. A plaque commemorating the school was installed by the Prince George's County Historical and Cultural Trust and the Board of Education in 2001.

76B-15

Camp Springs Rosenwald School

7039 Allentown Road, Camp Springs

Built 1924

There has been a school for African-American children on this site since 1902. In June of that year, the Board of School Commissioners ordered that a school be established near Camp Springs, and the building committee was directed to select a site. A deed for three quarters of an acre was executed in October 1902; it included a right-of-way from the public road. By January 1903, the one-room school had been completed, set back from the main road through Camp Springs and accessible by the long right-of-way.

Within 20 years, the one-room school was overcrowded, and the Board of Education (which had superseded the Board of School Commissioners) was petitioned to provide a new school building for the community. The present building was constructed in 1924 with the support of Rosenwald funds. Architect Russell Mitchell drew up the plans, and W.E. Fowler of Seat Pleasant was contracted to have the building completed by October 1924. The Camp Springs School (Colored School 2 in Election District 6) opened that year with two fairly spacious classrooms. Adjoining the school property on the west stood Mount Hope A.M.E. Church, whose trustees gave written permission for the schoolchildren to use the two-acre church yard as a playground.

The Camp Springs School is a modest frame building typical of the plainer schoolhouses of the Rosenwald period. It is a one-story, side-gabled building of wood frame construction; entrance is through the central bay of the main south facade. The banks of windows that once lighted the east and west gable ends have been covered by wood siding and replaced by new entrances in both gable ends. Attached to the rear elevation at right angles is a lower wing, which may incorporate the earlier one-room school.

After the beginning of school desegregation, the Camp Springs School was sold in 1955. Since that time it has been considerably altered to serve as a kitchen and cabinet shop. It is still recognizable as a Rosenwald-period school building, and is a significant site in the history of black education in Prince George's County.



The Camp Springs School today.



81A-13

Clinton Rosenwald School

9122 Piscataway Road, Clinton

Historic resource; built 1927

ABOVE: The Clinton School soon after its construction. Note the chamfered decoration in the covered entryway, the flag pole, and what may be a privy at right.

BELOW: Today the building has been substantially modernized and enlarged; its original form is scarcely recognizable, but its main block still represents a typical schoolhouse of the Rosenwald period.

This building stands on the site of the Freedmen's Bureau school, built in 1868–69 for black children in Surratts Election District 9. This school opened in the midst of much local controversy over teachers, trustees and deeds. The school lot adjoined the farm of the Surratt family, where Mary Surratt had kept a tavern/post office/polling place until 1864. (In July 1865, Mary Surratt was hanged for implication in the assassination of Abraham Lincoln.) The deed for the school lot was finally executed in 1878; it specified that the schoolchildren were permitted to use Mrs. Surratt's well. By this time, an African Methodist Episcopal Church had been built on the land immediately adjoining the school lot on the west; together the school and church became an important center for the local black population.



The one-room Freedmen's Bureau school continued in use, despite frequent changes in teachers and trustees, for 57 years. In January 1925, patrons of the school began to petition the Board of Education for a new building. In the following year, the board appropriated funds toward this end, and construction was supported with Rosenwald funds. The school (Colored School 1 in Election District 9) opened in 1927 on the site of the older school. Typical of the larger, two-classroom schools, it operated

until the beginning of school integration in the early 1950s. The school building was sold in 1955 to the Clinton American Legion Post 259, which undertook the modern alterations and additions. Although today the modern building is not recognizable as a Rosenwald school, it is significant for its role in the history of African-American education in the county.

84-17

Sharpersville School

15508 Berry Road, Accokeek vicinity

Built c. 1877

Sharpersville School may be the oldest surviving African-American schoolhouse still standing in Prince George's County; it is likely that it incorporates the one-room schoolhouse built in 1877 by the Board of School Commissioners, and, if so, is the first schoolhouse built in this area for African-American children after the period of Freedmen's Bureau schools.

Sharpersville School is a small one-story frame building that incorporates an early one-room schoolhouse. The gable-roof main block has a two-bay west gable front. A low shed addition extends to the south, enclosing the two-bay south elevation of the building; there is a second entrance into the west front of this addition.

Before the establishment of the Sharpersville School, a school had been established by the Freedmen's Bureau a short distance to the north in the area known as Lower Piscataway; the school opened in October 1868 with 20 pupils, a number that more than doubled within a few years. After the Freedmen's Bureau ceased operations in 1872, the school continued to operate under the aegis of the Board of School Commissioners.

The Sharpersville schoolhouse is closely associated with Augustus Lancaster (1820–1894), a local black farmer, who was himself illiterate, but whose children had attended the Freedmen's Bureau school. In 1877 Lancaster purchased 13 acres from William H. Gwynn, owner of extensive lands in the Piscataway area. Lancaster then offered one acre, adjoining his farmhouse, to the Board of School Commissioners for the erection of a new schoolhouse. The school which was erected here became known as Colored School 1 in Election District 5. In spite of its small size, at times it served seven grades. As other schools were built over the years, students were transferred to newer and larger schools, but the Sharpersville School continued to operate until approximately 1940.

Augustus Lancaster served as a school trustee from the time of the school's opening until his death in 1894; two of his sons served as trustees until 1923 and 1940. The Lancaster family continued to live in the farmhouse immediately to the south of the schoolhouse. In 1945, the acre on which it stands was deeded back to Augustus Lancaster's son, Dominic. After that time a south shed addition was built to enlarge the schoolhouse as a family dwelling.



RIGHT: The asymmetrical projection is an original feature shared with certain other Linthicum and Linthicum-designed Rosenwald schools, such as the Brandywine school, **BELOW**, at 14110 Gibbons Church Road, which was absorbed into a large brick residence in 1988.



85A-26

T.B. Rosenwald School

14000 Crain Highway, Brandywine

Built 1926



The T.B. School replaced an earlier, smaller schoolhouse constructed during the period of the Freedmen's Bureau. It was built to serve the younger black children of the T.B. and Townshend areas of southern Prince George's County.¹

The one-story hip-roof building has been significantly altered to serve today as a sales office for a used car company. The original entrance on the west facade has been converted into a window, and two new entrances opened: one in an enclosed porch area in the first bay of the west facade and another in the first bay of the south elevation.

The earlier Freedmen's Bureau school operated (since 1872) a short distance west of the village of T.B. That first schoolhouse was probably a very simple one-room structure typical of the period immediately after the Civil War. In April of 1920, the Board of School Commissioners acquired by tax sale a one-acre lot on the east side of the Washington-La Plata Road, a lot which had for 12 years been the property of the United Order of True Reformers. The school was not built, however, until after the board (by then the Board of Education) purchased a second one-acre lot adjoining on the east. In September 1925, a contract was awarded to the architectural firm of Linthicum and Linthicum to prepare plans for a school to be built on the T.B. site; plans were similar to those schools planned for Laurel, Lakeland, Bowie and Westwood. Like these other schools, the T.B. School (Colored School 1 in Election District 11) was partially funded through the Rosenwald program with matching contributions from the local black community.

The T.B. school operated until the eve of school desegregation. It was auctioned, along with several other black schoolhouses, in 1952, and in the late 1960s was remodeled into a sales office for the Brandywine Sales and Service used car company.

¹ T.B. is named for two of the largest nineteenth-century landowners in the area: William Townshend and Thomas Brooke. Tradition maintains the name was derived from a boundary stone carved with T and B, marking Townshend's property to the west and Brooke's property to the east.

87A-12

Poplar Hill School

19104 Croom Road, Baden

Historic site; built 1936

The Poplar Hill School is a small frame schoolhouse, the second schoolhouse in this immediate vicinity to be built for the education of black children. It replaced the school that was built in 1878. It is a one-story gable-roof school building; it is three bays wide, with entrance into the third bay of the west facade. The original wood siding has been covered with white aluminum siding, and the large windows have been replaced with small modern ones.

The first school at Poplar Hill was built in 1878 on land that was sold to the Board of School Commissioners by J. Allen Hawkins. Hawkins was a freedman and former enslaved laborer of local planter John L. Turner. After Emancipation, Hawkins worked as a farm hand and by 1868 was able to purchase a five-acre parcel from Dr. Mathias Latimer. Hawkins worked his small farm with his wife, Charity, and their family, and in 1877 offered one acre of his farm to the Board of School Commissioners for the establishment of a school. Until that time, classes had been held a short distance to the north in the Freedmen's Bureau building, which also served as St. Thomas Methodist meetinghouse. The new school (Colored School 2 in Election District 8) was built in 1878 on the north side of the road from Woodville (Aquasco) to Magruder's Ferry; Hawkins' deed to the board specifically granted the school children use of his spring, and Hawkins served for many years as trustee of the new school.

The new school, known as Black Swamp School from its location near the Black Swamp Creek, served to educate the local black children for nearly 60 years. In February 1935, however, the Board of Education (successor to the Board of School Commissioners) entertained a request for a new school building. In the following year, another acre of the Latimer land was purchased (on the south side of the road, across from the Black Swamp



Poplar Hill School

School), and the new and larger school was finished within the year. The old Black Swamp School was sold and enlarged to serve as a private residence.

Even this replacement school, which has been known as the Poplar Hill School, is a very small building. It is uncertain why such a small building was erected, considering that it was built as late as 1936; the much larger Woodville School was built in 1934. The new Poplar Hill school operated for only 25 years. It was closed in 1952, and purchased by the Order of Elks, Lodge 1003. The fraternal order has renovated the building and continues to use it as a social center. The building is not immediately recognizable as a school building, for its form is unlike both the early Freedmen's Bureau structures and the schools built during the Rosenwald era. It is therefore not representative of the traditional school form, but it is a reminder of the progress of black education in the rural areas of the county.

87A-57 Black Swamp School

19011 Croom Road, Brandywine

Historic site; built 1899

The original Black Swamp School was constructed in 1878 on one acre that the Prince George's County Board of School Commissioners purchased from J. Allen Hawkins and his wife, Charity, in 1877. The property was a portion of the 5½ acres that Hawkins, a former enslaved laborer, had purchased in 1868 from Dr. Mathias Latimer. The land was part of Latimer's plantation, Cole Brooke. Hawkins had been actively involved in the education of African-Americans in the area since at least 1872 when he was named by the Board of School Commissioners as one of three trustees for the former Freedmen's

Converted to a dwelling after nearly four decades as a school house, the building sits close to Croom Road and faces south. The south elevation of the vestibule contains a paneled wood entry door; The east elevation of the classroom block has three bays, with single, six-over-six, wood sashes in the center and right bays, and a half-light wood entry door in the left bay. This door replaced an original window.



Bureau school in the district. The school, known as St. Thomas, had been constructed in Horsehead, part of the Aquasco district, in 1868. The school gained its name from the congregation that held services in the school building, St. Thomas Methodist Episcopal Church. Officially "Colored School No. 2, District 8," Black Swamp School served as a replacement for the Freedmen's Bureau School in Horsehead. The new school gained its colorful appellation from its proximity to Black Swamp Creek.

The 1878 school house was destroyed by fire in 1898 and in 1899 the Board of School Commissioners authorized the construction of a new building. By the end of July of that year, a new schoolhouse measuring 30-by-24-by-11 feet had been completed at a cost of \$426.05, with an additional \$79.00 for furnishings. Expenses for

Black Swamp School during the 1888–89 school year included \$25.81 for rent, which may indicate that classes were held in a rented space during construction. Some text books appear to have been saved from the fire, with 55 new books issued by the county during the year, bringing the total number of text books allotted the school to 175. The annual report also reveals that enrollment in the one-room school reached a high of 34 during the spring session, but average attendance ranged between 11 and 18 for the four school semesters. In 1923-24, a committee of the Colored Public School Trustees Association conducted a survey of the 42 “Colored Public Schools” in Prince George’s County. The association was formed in May 1921 with the object of promoting better educational conditions for African-American students, with an emphasis on aiding schools in financial need. Isaiah Gray, a trustee of Black Swamp School, served on the committee. The objectives of the committee in publishing the report were explicitly stated: committee members sought “to encourage and inspire patrons to take greater personal interest in improving their school plants, to bring about a greater sympathy and interest on the part of white officials and employers, and to inform ‘outsiders’ as to educational [sic] conditions in our county.” The committee visited Black Swamp School on January 8, 1924. They reported: “The school building is not so old, but was poorly built.” They urged the community to “organize and gradually work out plans for improved conditions.” If everyone in the community participated and raised money through different activities, the committee stated, “you will not only soon have a new building, but you will have a new spirit in your community that will not stop at school house improvements.”

After the Colored Public School Trustees Association Report, classes continued to be held in the one-room Black Swamp School for more than a decade. In February 1935, the community petitioned the Board of Education for a new school building. In 1936, the board acquired two acres a short distance away, on the opposite side of Croom Road, for construction of a new school that opened the same year. The land was purchased from Ann R. Latimer, the daughter of Dr. Mathias Latimer who, nearly 70 years earlier, had sold the 5½ acres to freedman J. Allen Hawkins. The Black Swamp School property was purchased for \$100 by Daniel Skinner in October 1936. Skinner modified the school house for use as a dwelling, and the property remained in the family for 70 years. The property is protected by a perpetual preservation easement held by M-NCPPC, and is being restored to its original appearance by the current owner.

Dwellings, etc.

OUTSIDE DOCUMENTED COMMUNITIES



Slaves' Infirmary

Poplar Hill on His Lordship's Kindness (81A-001)

7606 Woodyard Road, Clinton

Historic site; National Historic Landmark

The brick portion of this T-shaped building was probably constructed in the second quarter of the nineteenth century. Three bays wide with chimneys at each end, it has a frame wing at the rear. It is believed to have once served as an infirmary for the slaves on this plantation. African-American women often served as midwives and healers, delivering babies or attending to ailments.

Constructed from 1784–1786, Poplar Hill is a five-part brick Georgian mansion that was built for Robert Darnall on a tract known as His Lordship's Kindness. The plantation was later owned by Darnall's relations the Sewalls and Daingerfields.

The Infirmary is situated to the east of the mansion in a group of original dependencies that include a smoke house, wash house, pigeon cote, and privy.

Today Poplar Hill is owned and operated by the John M. and Sara R. Walton Foundation, and is protected by a preservation easement held by the Maryland Historical Trust. Group tours are available by request.



ABOVE: The Infirmary

BELOW: Poplar Hill Mansion



69-24-25 Mount Hope Slave Quarter Ruin

Behind 2422 Parkway Street, Cheverly

Historic resource; c. 1840s

The Mount Hope Slave Quarter Ruin has historically been associated with the Mount Hope Plantation (Historic Site 69-024-11) at 1 Cheverly Circle. The ruins are located approximately 400 feet northeast of the plantation house. The Mount Hope Plantation was the home of Fielder Magruder, Jr., of the prominent Magruder

family of Maryland. The 716-acre plantation was established around 1839 by the young Magruder and was home to 12 slaves in 1840, 18 in 1850, and 25 in 1860. There are references to slave quarters on the property in the census records and tax assessments of this era. However, it is unclear whether they refer to this structure specifically. If

this chimney was a part of a slave quarter it would likely date to the 1840s to 1860s, when the Magruder's plantation and slave holdings grew.

The chimney ruin is approximately ten feet tall and more than seven feet wide at the base and is built of rough-cut, ironstone laid in a slightly



ABOVE: The much-taller chimney c. 1925, before it was modified

BELOW: The chimney today.



irregular course and held together by a mix of mortars including the original mortar, as well as modern mortars used for repairs, including Portland cement. Larger stones, emulating quoins, run along the corners of the chimney. The original cap of the chimney is missing; however, there is a newer rounded concrete cap over the flue. There is an iron lintel across the fireplace that is not present in the 1920s photograph. There is a metal bar inside the chimney that may be original, as it was designed to hold hooks for cooking. The chimney is situated on a hill sloping eastward, and is supported under the east elevation by a large stone that protrudes from the north and east elevations. The east elevation was likely the exterior elevation; it has a four-foot-high, two-foot-deep shelf on the east elevation with a stone on the southeast end. There are no other visible remains of a dwelling and there are no visible marks on the chimney indicating where the walls of the house may have intersected with the chimney.

The Town of Cheverly, in which the ruins now rest, was once a part of the plantation of Fielder Magruder, Jr., known as Mount Hope. The plantation grew tobacco and other crops. It rested atop a hill, overlooking Washington, D.C., Magruder and his wife never had children of their own, so after his death in 1888 and his wife's death in 1894 the plantation of approximately 193 acres were left to Magruder's sister Matilda and her husband Dionysius Sheriff. That land, and neighboring land owned by Sheriff were sold by his heirs to Robert Marshall for the development of Cheverly. As he walked about the property that would become Cheverly, Marshall recalled coming across a slave cabin ruin along a shaded lane, that he believed belonged to the Mount Hope

plantation. His assertion was supported by later observers who believed the stone construction was similar to other buildings associated with the plantation, including a dairy. Cheverly historian Raymond Bellamy conducted significant research on the site from the late 1970s through the early 1990s. The research was inconclusive in determining whether the chimney that remains was actually part of a slave quarter or if it was something else. Due to the size of the chimney, some believe it was a part of an overseers' house from another nearby plantation, while others believe the chimney was nothing more than a backyard barbecue. Although photographs from the 1920s, when Robert Marshall laid out Cheverly, depict the chimney with fallen timbers around it, the exact appearance or construction of the structure, as well as its use, remains a mystery. Furthermore, the timbers in the picture do not appear to be related to the chimney. If the chimney did belong to a slave quarter, then it was likely the home of an enslaved woman, Mary Barnes, who was either African-American or of mixed-race, and who was a widow with eight children. It may also have been the home of a former enslaved laborer of the Magruders, Henry Hawkins, who was said to have lived near the main house with his wife and six children.

As he walked about the property that would become Cheverly, Marshall recalled coming across a slave cabin ruin along a shaded lane.

As little structural evidence of the past remains above ground or in archival records, an archeological survey will have to be conducted to learn more about the resource, its age and origins, and its inhabitants.

9301 Good Luck Road, Lanham

Historic site; built c. 1907

The Franklin Pierce House survives in a subdivision of modern single-family houses. It was built circa 1907 to replace an older house which had been destroyed by fire. The older structure had been the home of Henry King for most of the second half of the nineteenth century, and later the home of the Kagle and Hoffman families.

The Pierce House is a two-story side-gabled house of wood frame construction, with two interior brick chimneys marking the location of the central hall. Typical of the I-house form, it has a single parlor on each side of the central stair hall. A one-story porch shelters the main north facade, and the principal roof plane is punctuated by a central flush crossgable, highlighted by sawtooth shingles and a tiny diamond-shaped window. There is a two-story rear kitchen wing centered at right angles to the main block. Over the past thirty years the shutters have been removed from the upper stories and the porch has been screened.

The earlier house and the 1-1/8 acre on which it stood were sold in 1904 to Franklin Pierce, a African-American railroad worker from Virginia. Within a few years, the house was destroyed by fire, and Pierce had the subject house constructed close to the old foundations. In this house the Pierces raised their large family. Several of Franklin Pierce's sons worked with him on the railroad, while his wife and their daughter-in-law took in laundry at home. The house is still the home of Franklin Pierce's descendants. The house follows the plan of a so-called "I-house," with central stair hall and flanking parlors, and has a rear kitchen wing forming a T. Part of its significance lies in the fact that it was built for a family of laborers, members of an emerging class of black middle-class landowners.



The drive as it exists today at the Colbert Family Farm Site. The Colberts' house was located at the end of this drive, directly to the left. In the Colberts' era the farm was sparsely wooded.



71B-19

Colbert Family Farm Site

9016 Race Track Road, Bowie

Historic site; c. 1874–1945 (Archeological Site 18PR950)

Significant as the site of a free black homestead from the antebellum period, this eight-acre parcel was purchased from Joshua T. Clarke by three African-American brothers, Joseph Calvert, James H. Calvert, and William T. Calvert in 1874. The brothers later changed the spelling of their last name to Colbert. James H. and William T. Colbert sold their interest in the eight-acre tract to Joseph Colbert in 1891. Joseph Colbert added a 12-acre parcel to his holdings in 1900 and 67 $\frac{3}{4}$ acres in 1902, for a total of 87 $\frac{3}{4}$ acres. The property remained in the possession of the Colbert family until 1946.

The Colbert Family Farm Site was discovered through archeological excavations required through the subdivision review Process. Artifacts recovered from the site indicate that the Colberts may have been living on the property prior to purchasing the land in 1874. Several varieties of nineteenth-century whitewares, including flow blue, banded, and transfer printed types, were recovered. William Jackson Calvert, the father of Joseph, James, and William Calvert, is found in the 1860 census in Prince George's County and his occupation is listed as laborer. A Jackson Calvert is also found in the 1850 census in Anne Arundel County and is listed as a laborer. Therefore, it is probable that William Jackson Calvert moved his family from Anne Arundel to Prince George's County some

time between 1850 and 1860 and possibly built a house (of which only traces of the foundation remain). A house is shown in the location of the site on the 1861 Martenet map, but the owner's name is not listed.

The Calverts/Colberts were Roman Catholics and probably attended White Marsh Catholic Church¹ until Ascension Roman Catholic Church was built in 1893. A one-room school house was built for black students on nearby Horsepen Hill to the south of Bowie in 1877. Joseph and Harriet Colbert's children probably attended this school, as several of them are listed as "at school" in the 1880 census. Later, primary school students attended a model school on the Maryland Normal School campus, which opened in 1911.² William Colbert, a son of Joseph and Harriett Colbert, was appointed a trustee of the school in 1913. Joseph and Harriet Colbert were able to expand their land holdings in the early twentieth century, possibly from the wages Joseph earned as a railroad laborer. A large quantity of buttons was found near the Colbert house foundation, so it is likely that Harriet Colbert and some of her daughters took in laundry or served as seamstresses in the local community. By 1910, Joseph Colbert had apparently retired from his railroad job and was working as a farmer on his own land. Joseph Colbert died in April 1917 and his wife, Harriet, died shortly afterwards in December 1917. They were both buried in the Ascension Roman Catholic Church cemetery, located just a few miles west of their farmstead. The 1920 census indicates that Abraham, age 37, Cecelia age 39, and Louise Colbert age 27, continued to live in their parents' house. Abraham Colbert's occupation is listed as farmer in 1920. Abraham Colbert's occupation in 1910 was a laborer at the Department of the Interior. He most likely traveled to work over the railroad line. After his parents' deaths, Abraham apparently took over the farming operations on the property.

By 1930, William Colbert and his family were living on the Colbert property, along with his sister, Louise Colbert. William Colbert had a job with the Post Office. In 1945, several of the Colbert heirs apparently agreed to sell their parents' land and a trustee was appointed to sell the property and divide the proceeds. The Colbert house may have burned down, as many burned artifacts were recovered in the archeological excavations. Later owners built the current house on the property circa 1947 and sold off several smaller parcels next to Race Track Road. The property is planned to be developed as a housing subdivision, but the Colbert Family Farm Site will be preserved on the lot containing the 1947 house.

¹ Many Roman Catholic African-Americans attended White Marsh.

² The Maryland Normal School later became Bowie State University and is located just to the north of the Colbert farmstead. See chapters on Education and Bowie for photographs of children at this school in 1918.

10951 Waterport Court, Largo

Historic site; early 19th century–after 1938
(M-NCPPC)

Now completely obscured by subdivisions, the Northampton site includes the foundations of several buildings of an important early plantation. Northampton was a 1,000-acre tract which came into the possession of Thomas Sprigg in 1673; the plantation remained the home of the Sprigg family for five generations. The early plantation house was destroyed by fire in 1909, and a subsequent dwelling was destroyed in 1967. The considerable acreage that once comprised the Northampton plantation has been developed into the large residential subdivision of Lake Arbor. Two small parcels of land (totaling 12.6 acres) have been reserved as parkland, and on this land are located the ruins of the mansion, several domestic outbuildings, a tobacco barn and two slave quarters (one built of wood and a larger one of brick). The parkland where the quarters are located is now nearly surrounded with townhouse complexes. Beginning in 1987, intensive archeological work has been undertaken on both quarters, and a considerable amount of information has been uncovered about the people who resided in them and their lifeways. The brick quarter has been stabilized and partially rebuilt for interpretive tours.

The brick quarter was recorded in a 1936 Historic American Buildings Survey photograph when families were still living in it. The building was one-and-one-half stories high and side-gabled, with two entrances near the center of its south facade, indicating its duplex plan. Windows lighted the north (rear) elevation of the building as well as the two gable ends. A wide brick chimney was centered at the ridge and served back-to-back fireplaces in the adjoining dwelling spaces; on one side, the hearth lintel was fashioned out of a straightened iron wagon wheel.

The brick quarter is the only known two-family brick slave quarter surviving in Maryland. It was probably built early in the nineteenth century by Samuel Sprigg after he inherited Northampton from his uncle, Osborn Sprigg, in 1815. Osborn Sprigg's will provides evidence of the relationship between master and slave. Ten of his slaves were freed by his will. For example, "Tom" was freed and given livestock, a horse, and a silver watch, as well as the house in which he then lived, for the rest of his life. "Frank," together with his wife and children, was also freed, and was given the house in which his father then lived, for the rest of his life. Osborn Sprigg ended his will by charging his heir to be kind and friendly to the servants who had been freed by his will, and to continue to treat those old and infirm servants "in the same humane manner which heretofore they have been accustomed to."

Soon after he inherited Northampton, Samuel Sprigg was elected governor of Maryland, and after his term in Annapolis (1819–1822), spent the rest of his life at Northampton. He was a member of the vestry of nearby St. Barnabas' Church, president of the Board of the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal Company,



The brick quarter
in 1936.

and was known as “a gentleman of amiable manners and a favorite of the People”—a man of “immense wealth” and one who “attended diligently to all the concerns of his farms.” When Sprigg died in 1855, he left his large plantation to his wife, Violetta; the plantation workforce at that time included 61 enslaved laborers.

Violetta Sprigg continued to live at Northampton for another 10 years, but in March 1865 sold the property (by then 713 acres) to John Contee Fairfax and George W. Riggs. Members of the Fairfax family made Northampton their home. In 1869, Fairfax inherited the title of 11th Lord Fairfax, Baron of Cameron; he chose to remain in the United States and resided at Northampton until his death in 1900. Through archival records, such as wills, inventories, census records and estate files, pulled together by oral history, it is possible to identify the families (Hawkins, Smith, and Pongee) of those Northampton slaves and freedmen who occupied these quarters, and who farmed the land for another several generations. Several of their direct descendants remain in this area of Prince George’s County today, and are involved in the research, rehabilitation and interpretation of the site. The survival of this type of building as an interpretive shell is highly unusual; the information about the slave and later free families, and about their way of life, together with the physical archeological information, make the Northampton slave quarters an outstandingly important site.

76A-14

Butler House

6403 Oxon Hill Road, Oxon Hill

Historic site; built 1853

National Register of Historic Places

The Butler House is a modest frame dwelling which once also served as a post office. Since 1853 it has been the home of the Butlers, a free black family. According to family tradition, Henry Alexander Boteler (Butler) brought his family from Charles to Prince George's County circa 1853. He moved into this house and completed the construction of it. According to this same tradition, the house was originally built to be used as a post office, but it became the Butler family dwelling and the nucleus of the farm which the family gradually developed around it, including chicken house, meat house, barns and other necessary domestic and agricultural outbuildings. The house was deeded to Henry Alexander Butler in 1873. Historic photographs, family records and portraits indicate the substantial status and aspirations of the family.

This photograph of the Butler House was taken several years ago; today the house has all but collapsed.

The house faces west, fronting on an old unpaved road; it is two stories high with a steep gable roof, and there is a lower shed-roof kitchen addition at the north gable end. The main block is one room deep, and there is an entrance in the southernmost bay of both west and east elevations. The building was originally sheathed with plain wood siding. There is a one-story screened porch across the east (rear) elevation.



The Butlers maintained a successful small farm for several generations, with the house and property passing down through the children and grandchildren of Henry Alexander Butler. It remains in the possession of his descendants today. The house has been altered in appearance by the application of the formstone veneer. Although the house is seriously deteriorating condition, it is of considerable historical importance because it represents the progress of a free black family in the period before the Civil War. The Butler House was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 2005.

72-10

Van Horn-Mitchell House

4706 Mann Street, Deanwood

Historic site; built 1803

The Van Horn-Mitchell House was built at the beginning of the nineteenth century as a plantation house for a family of white landowners, but during most of the twentieth century it has been a site important to the county's black history.

The house is two-and-one-half stories high, side-gabled and built of brick, presently painted white. Entrance is in the central bay of the west facade, which overlooks the boundary (Eastern Avenue) between Prince George's County and the District of Columbia. A modern flat-roof porch, with brick posts and balcony, shelters this facade. Three gable dormers (modern additions) pierce each plane of the gable roof, and a flush chimney rises at the ridge at each of the north and south gable ends. Built onto the south gable end is a small one-story hip-roof wing, also built of brick. The main block consists of a central stairhall with a parlor on each side, running the full depth of the house.

The Van Horn-Mitchell House stands on part of a tract called "Fife Enlarged," most of which is now within the District of Columbia. This was the home property of Alethea and Archibald Van Horn. Archibald Van Horn served as Speaker of the Maryland House of Delegates and was subsequently elected to the United States Congress (1807-11), after which he again served in the Maryland House of Delegates until his death in 1817. The property passed to the heirs of his daughter, and for most of the second half of the century was the home of the James Fowler family. With the development of subdivisions like Fairmount Heights at the beginning of the twentieth century, this area gradually came to be populated by black families. In 1940, the house and lot were purchased by Benjamin and Clara Mitchell, leaders in the Muslim faith, who had come to Washington from Tuskegee Institute in Alabama. Under their ownership, this was a gathering place for such prominent black individuals as Portia Washington Pittman, Mohammed Ali, Elijah Mohammed, Malcolm X, and Anwar Sadat.





82B-34 Charles Duckett Log Cabin

Patuxent River Park, Croom vicinity
Built mid-late 19th century; (M-NCPPC)

The Duckett Cabin is a one-room side-gabled building roughly 16 by 14 feet, constructed of squared chestnut logs. All logs appear to be hand hewn; they are joined at the corners by full-dovetail notching, chinked with a modern white cement mixture, with small wedges of wood randomly inserted in the chinking. Entrance is through a five-foot high batten door roughly centered in the south facade. There is a rear door opposite it in the north elevation, and only two windows: one in the east gable end and one in the north elevation. A new exterior stone chimney was built at the west gable end, and a new wood shingle roof was installed. At this time also a new partial second-story loft (accessible by ladder) was built on the interior; in its original form, the cabin probably had a full second-story sleeping space.

The cabin originally stood on the plantation of Henry B.B. Trueman on the old Aquasco Road near its intersection with the road to Nottingham. Trueman's was a small plantation, only 64 acres, and he raised a comparatively small amount of tobacco, as well as wheat, corn and oats; his labor force in 1860 consisted of 10 enslaved laborers. The 1860

census indicates only one slave house on the plantation acreage. After emancipation, this log quarter may have been the dwelling of the family of four freed persons, formerly slaves of the Trueman family, who remained on the land to work at the Trueman farm.

The farm near Aquasco has remained in the possession of Trueman's descendants to the present day. In the 1970s, when museum exhibits were being collected for the Patuxent River Park, Robert Trueman donated the log cabin. It was dismantled, moved and reassembled at the Jug Bay Park.

The origins of Duckett Cabin remain unclear; however, research has provided some theories on its construction and possible residents. It appears that the cabin may have been built anytime between 1840 and 1910, and was occupied until the 1920s. Two possible residents include Charles Duckett and Lewis Gross. The current interpretation used in the Patuxent Village is that the cabin was built in the 1880s by Charles Duckett, a former slave on the Trueman Farm. Before building the cabin, Duckett enlisted in the Union Army with the 19th Regiment of the United States Colored Troops and transferred to the Navy in 1864. He was discharged from service in 1866 and returned to the Trueman Farm as a farm hand in 1870. Duckett likely married another former slave, Juliet Blake Gross. Juliet's son Lewis Gross and his wife Georgianna lived on the Trueman farm until the 1920s and may have been the final residents of the Trueman cabin, along with Charles Duckett's widow.

The Duckett cabin, in excellent condition, stands in a wooded area near the Patuxent River, part of an interpretive park program; isolated from its historical context, it is nevertheless significant as a rare surviving example of its type. A wood frame building believed to have been a slave dwelling still stands on the grounds of Melford, but it is much altered and has been converted into a farm office. The only other known surviving log quarter, at Bleak Hill, was demolished in the late 1970s.



82B-35-17 Turton-Smith House

17414 Nottingham Road, Nottingham

Historic site; built 1850s

The Turton-Smith House is a small mid-nineteenth century vernacular dwelling situated on the bank of the Patuxent River. It is the last surviving structure in the village that dates from the nineteenth century. The main block is of wood frame construction, a low two-and-one-half stories, side gabled and nearly square in plan; it has a steep gable roof with an extended west plane. The house is sheathed in painted cedar shingles. Attached to the north is a small side-gabled, one-story kitchen addition; to the south and east is a one-story porch. A one-and-one-half-story summer kitchen, now used as an office, stands a short distance southwest of the house.

The house was built by Richard Turton, a white man, shortly after he acquired the one-acre lot in 1850. The Turton family owned considerable property in the Nottingham District during the nineteenth century. He lived in the house only a short time, however, dying at the age of 28 in 1857. After the death of his widow, the property was left to his four siblings. Since his estate was insufficient to pay his debts, however, a trustee was appointed to sell the real estate.

The Nottingham District has had a long-standing African-American population; after the Civil War, several schools and churches were built for the local black population, and several black families acquired property in and near the village of Nottingham. The Savoy family, a local black family of long standing, owned and occupied the Turton-Smith House from 1877 to 1902. The house was after that home to Dewitt L. Washington from 1905 to 1933. By the middle of the twentieth century, the property was owned and occupied by members of several local white families, the Downings and the Ryons. In 1968 the house was purchased by the Smith family. It has since been sold again and rehabilitated. The property is one of many examples of multiracial historic property ownership in the county.

82B-35-19 Wiseman House

17501 Watershed Drive, Nottingham

Built 1901



The Wisemans are a black family of long standing in Nottingham. In 1885, Elizabeth Caroline Wiseman purchased one of the oldest houses in the village and lived there with her daughter, working for other village families as a seamstress. In February 1901, the fire which destroyed a hotel the adjoining Plater house also destroyed the Wiseman's. This house was rebuilt on the remains of the old foundation. For many years, Mrs. Wiseman's house served as a weekend hostel for hunters and fishermen. It remains to this day in the Wiseman family.

Resting on a high stone foundation infilled with brick, the Wiseman House consists of two three-bay sections, each with a central doorway and chimney at the west end. Windows are two-over-two double-hung sash.

A modest two-family dwelling which stands on the south side of the old road which led to the principal warehouses and pier, the Wiseman House is one of the very few historic duplexes surviving in Prince George's County.

*One of the very few
historic duplexes in Prince
George's County.*



ABOVE: Frank A. Robinson, Joseph Savoy, and Norris Gross cultivating potatoes at Ferndale Farm, 1927. Courtesy Franklin A. Robinson, Jr, via Robinson Family Papers, AC/NMAH.

Savoy Family Tenant House Site

12801 Missouri Avenue, Brandywine
1920–c.1995

This dwelling was constructed circa 1920 by Frank A. Robinson of Ferndale Farm. Robinson was a farmer and builder who built the original Bank of Brandywine (Historic Site 85A-032-30) and the residence of Dr. Robert E. Baden. The house was never supplied with electricity or plumbing—a hand-dug well provided water.

The house was built for the Savoy family who were long-term tenants of the Robinsons. Eliza and John Henry Savoy had been living on the farm since at least 1866 when they were noted in the St. Thomas' Episcopal Parish register as living "at Thos. W. Robinson's;" the farm was at that time known as Potomac Landing. Before that, the Savoy family were listed in the 1860 census as living at the St. Thomas' Rectory in Croom, "servants" of the Reverend Samuel R. Gordon. They had at least three children: Mary Emily, born 1866, William Henry, born 1872, and John Henry born 1873. Joseph and Clovinia Savoy lived in this house from the time of its construction. Although the house suffered a chimney fire circa 1965-66, Savoy descendants lived there until the late twentieth century. The house is no longer extant.

BELOW: Located near the southwest intersection of Dyson Road and Missouri Avenue, the tenant house at Ferndale Farm was a two-story, four-room, wood-frame dwelling with clapboard siding set on wood pilings. Windows were six-over-six in configuration and the house had a central chimney and standing-seam metal roof. Photo c. 1987, courtesy of Franklin A. Robinson, Jr.



Commercial Resources

OUTSIDE DOCUMENTED COMMUNITIES



Members of the
Civil Patrol Squadron
in 1946 at Columbia
Air Center.



82B-38 Columbia Air Center Site

1600 Croom Airport Road
Historic site, 1941–1958 (M-NCPPC)

*The first African-
American-owned
-and-operated
airport on
the Eastern
Seaboard.*

The Columbia Air Center opened in 1941 under the leadership of John W. Greene, Jr., and Dr. C. M. Gill and was the first and only African-American-owned-and-operated airport on the eastern seaboard for nearly two decades. Greene discovered a love of flight long before he moved to the Washington, D.C., area. He grew up in Chattanooga, Tennessee, and went to the Hampton Institute in Virginia to study mechanical engineering in 1920. In 1922, Greene finished school in Virginia and moved to Boston, where he began flying lessons. By 1929 Greene earned his private pilot license and a limited commercial transport license. In 1933 he was the second African-American man in the United States to earn his commercial pilot license and in 1936 he became a certified engineer and airplane mechanic. By 1940, Greene received certification to teach aviation mechanics in Washington, D.C., and Boston and was a member of the Caterpillar and Harvard flying clubs. The same year he moved to Washington, D.C., to teach aviation mechanics at Phelps Vocational High School and started the “Cloud Club” with other local black aviators out of Beacon Airfield in Virginia. Within the year, the Cloud Club relocated to Prince George’s County due to increasing tensions with white pilots at the airfield in Virginia. The white pilots

and the airfield owner accused the African-American pilots of committing infractions against their rules, which the Cloud Club took as a sign they were not welcome there. The Cloud Club members believed this same type of behavior could happen at any white-owned airfield, thus they needed to find a place of their own. In 1941, John W. Greene, Jr., and the other Cloud Club leaders found a potato farm along the Patuxent River, south of Upper Marlboro in Croom. They leased the property from Rebecca Fisher and quickly leveled a runway, and built an office and a hangar at what they called “Riverside Field.” Greene was named the airport manager. With the onset of World War II, civilian flight was restricted and Riverside Field was used by the U.S. Navy to train pilots from 1941–1944. In 1944, when the airfield returned to civilian control, Greene and his partner, Dr. Gill, created and submitted their future plans for the airfield and by 1945 the Columbia Air Center, as it was renamed, was a “Designated Landing Area” and had received full authority for civil aircraft operations. By 1946, the Columbia Air Center had expanded its services with eight runways, an additional large hangar, a snack bar and tie downs for planes based at the field. The center offered charter flights and lessons as well, since it was certified as a “Primary Flying School.” In 1949, the airport had four hangars where planes could be stored and repaired; the airport also sold parts as an authorized dealer for several companies. In 1950, the Columbia Air Center was the busiest airport in Prince George’s County, with the ability to accommodate up to 150 flights in and out each day. The center and its leader, Greene, saw the busy airport as more than a place for arrivals and departures; Greene was an advocate for youth education and was dedicated to teaching young people to fly. With this in mind, the Columbia Air Center offered a variety of lessons in aviation-related fields, including navigation, meteorology, civil air regulation, theory of flight, parachuting, aircraft instruments, engines, and plane servicing. In 1946 the center had twenty-five students and owned four aircraft. The Columbia Squadron, the first African-American civil air patrol, formed at the Columbia Air Center at the same time. Under Greene’s leadership the center ran successfully as an airfield and a school. In 1956 Greene retired from his position but he continued to advocate aviation education for young people for the rest of his life. Following Greene, Charles E. Wren and Herbert H. Jones, Jr. operated the field as the “W and J Flying Service.” They later formed a partnership

One of the hangars at Columbia Air Center. The light-colored V-shape at the center of the building’s roof is a wind sock.



with William L. Taylor and Albert L. Young and called the field the “Capitol Flying Club.” The Columbia Air Center operated under these new names until 1958 when the Fisher Family decided not to renew their lease due to increasing problems with vandalism. The next year, the land was given to The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission and was incorporated into the Patuxent River Park. No trace of the airfield remains, but interpretive signage has been installed to commemorate the achievement represented by Columbia Air Center.

15710 Brandywine Road, Brandywine

Historic site; 1950s–1960s

Originally purchased as a hunting ground in 1947, Arthur Wilmer paid \$6,500 for the old tobacco farm in Brandywine once owned by the Grimes family. Before he owned Wilmer's Park, Arthur Wilmer owned the Little Harlem supper club in northwest Washington, D.C. After finishing shows nearby, Wilmer's club drew in African-American entertainers like Duke Ellington, Cab Calloway, and Ella Fitzgerald for meals and drinks. Wilmer took advantage of these connections and, along with Evans Grill (see page 162), Wilmer's Park became an important stop on the Chitlin' Circuit¹ in the early 1950s. During the 1940s and 1950s, African-American entertainers could perform at upscale urban clubs and theaters; however, many of these

*An important stop
on the "Chitlin'
Circuit."*

clubs did not allow African-American patrons. Wilmer and other African-American club owners opened their venues to all patrons during the time of segregation. The Chitlin' Circuit brought up-and-coming black entertainers to parks, clubs and theaters; Wilmer's Park is the last remaining Chitlin' Circuit venue in southern Maryland. A number of notable musicians played at Wilmer's Park on their way up the music charts, including a young Chuck Berry, Stevie Wonder, The Dells, Smokey and the Miracles, The Delfonics, Roy Hamilton, Chubby Checker, The Temptations, Fats Domino, B.B. King, Jackie Wilson, Gladys Knight and the Pips, Duke Ellington, Otis Redding, Count Basie, Patti La Belle and the Blue Bells, Sam Cooke, and Gary U.S. Bonds. In the early 1950s, Ray Charles brought in 15,000 fans to the Park. He was soon followed by another large headlining act, James Brown.

Wilmer accommodated his performers and patrons on the southern 11 acres of his property with a number of facilities, allowing a variety of acts to perform throughout the year. This large property was a perfect rural setting to host the variety of acts that performed on the Chitlin' Circuit. The first buildings on the site, constructed in the early 1950s, were a 6,000 square foot dance hall with five apartments below it, and a restaurant. The dance hall had a jukebox, bar, and pool tables. This venue could be used year-round. It was decorated inside with murals that were reproductions of Duke Ellington album covers designed by Washington, D.C., artist Eddie Henderson. In the mid-1950s Wilmer added a ticket booth by Brandywine Road with a nearby playground and picnic area for families. There was a vending stand in the area that sold trinkets, food, and liquor for the



A poster for a concert at Wilmer's Park from the 1970s.

¹ Both a real and symbolic term for venues that supported rhythm and blues performers, the "Chitlin' Circuit" is also a play on the colloquial term "Borscht Belt." Historically, Baltimore was the first city on the Chitlin' Circuit, which stretched through the south, bending west throughout Texas, extending northeast to Chicago, offering continuous opportunities for black entertainers.



The dancehall today. events. Wilmer also added a covered stage behind the dance hall with wooden bleachers built into the hill that could accommodate large crowds. The old tobacco barn is located behind this stage and dates to the Grimes Farm. Motel rooms for the entertainers were added in later years near the restaurant and were mostly used as dressing rooms. There was a smaller stage near the entry on Brandywine Road used for more modest acts and crowds. Wilmer's Park also offered hot air balloon rides from the field behind the barn. Wilmer built a house for his family not far from the dance hall, on the same property. Some of Wilmer's other relatives and close friends lived in the apartments below the dance hall. As a result of their regular exposure to the music scene their father brought to the park, many of Wilmer's family members took an interest in the music business. After his death, Wilmer's children took over the park, hoping to continue the musical tradition there. As desegregation took hold in the late 1960s and early 1970s, however, urban clubs opened their doors to all performers and patrons, dramatically impacting attendance at venues like Wilmer's. Desegregation also opened up professional sports teams to all players, thus fewer teams remained to play at the park during the day. As African-Americans made great strides, attendance at Wilmer's Park suffered. In the 1980s and 1990s, the Wilmer family opened their gates to a variety of acts, including rock groups, heavy metal, reggae and go-go music. The park hosted an annual Jerry Garcia celebration and many Rastafarian events. In the early 2000s the property was sold to the Arthur W. Wilmer Foundation, LLC, a for-profit real estate development group. Future plans for the rural site include a retirement community and a city center, which may eventually have a concert venue incorporated into the property.



As of this writing, no photographs are known to exist that document Wilmer's Park or Evans Grill during their heyday. It is hoped that some sense of the excitement that accompanied attendance at these venues has been conveyed by reproductions of the few available vintage posters. (A full-color version of one is found in the fold-out photographs at the end of the book.) The posters were produced by the Globe Poster Printing Corporation in Baltimore. Founded in 1929, "Globe designed and printed Day-Glo saturated posters for virtually every African-American musician of note—from Howlin' Wolf and James Brown to Prince and Tupac."¹

In *Mixing Messages: Graphic Design in Contemporary Culture* (1996, Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum Smithsonian Institution) author Ellen Lupton writes, "Although the direct, unpretentious style of Globe's posters might be deemed a crude 'vernacular' by some designers, the posters are viewed as a language of authority by the audience that reads them. According to Ken Moore of Icycle Productions, a company that promotes music events in Washington, D.C., 'Globe pretty much sets the standard in making the show "official." People in the Metro area are conditioned to recognize that, when they see a Globe poster, they know the show is really going on. You see fliers and handbills all the time, but if someone goes to the expense of ordering from Globe and putting up the posters, people feel really good that an artist or group actually is going to be there.'"²

In 2011, Globe's collection, including wood type, images and illustrations, was acquired by the Maryland Institute College of Art (MICA) and will be used and studied by students in the printmaking, graphic design, and illustration fields.

¹ Lewis, John, "Best of Baltimore 2011," *Baltimore* magazine, August 2011.

² Dolan, Michael, "How Globe Poster Turned Its World Day-Glo," *Washington City Paper*, September 9, 1994.