

NPS Form 10-900
(Rev. 10-90)

OMB No. 1024-0018

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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NATIONAL REGISTER

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Thomas' Methodist Episcopal Chapel

other names/site number Thomas' Chapel; CRS# K-316

2. Location

street & number Route 206 not for publication n/a
city or town Chapeltown, West Dover Hundred vicinity x
state Delaware code DE county Kent code 001
zip code 19964

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this x nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide x locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Daniel P. Griffith
Signature of certifying official

December 8, 1993
Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

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6. Function or Use

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Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: <u>Religion</u>	Sub: <u>Religious Facility</u>
<u>Funerary</u>	<u>Cemetery</u>
<u>Domestic</u>	<u>Secondary Structure</u>
<u>Domestic</u>	<u>Secondary Structure</u>
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: <u>Religion</u>	Sub: <u>Religious Facility</u>
<u>Funerary</u>	<u>Funerary</u>
<u>Domestic</u>	<u>Secondary Structure</u>
<u>Domestic</u>	<u>Secondary Structure</u>
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

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7. Description

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Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

Mid-Nineteenth Century: Greek Revival

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Brick

roof Asphalt Shingle

walls Brick

other _____

Narrative Description (Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

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

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

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

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

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Period of Significance 1877 - 1945

Significant Dates 1877

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)
n/a

Cultural Affiliation n/a

Architect/Builder Unknown

Narrative Statement of Significance (Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

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9. Major Bibliographical References

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(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS)

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary Location of Additional Data

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository: _____

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10. Geographical Data

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Acreage of Property 1.5 acres

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
1	<u>18</u>	<u>439100</u>	<u>4327740</u>	3	___	_____
2	___	_____	_____	4	___	_____

___ See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

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11. Form Prepared By
=====

name/title Robin K. Bodo, Historian
organization Delaware State Historic Preservation Office date 9/15/93
street & number 15 The Green telephone (302) 739-5685
city or town Dover state DE zip code 19901

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Additional Documentation
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Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage
or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

=====
Property Owner
=====

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)
name Mr. Francis Thomas, Treasurer; Thomas' Chapel Trustees
street & number RD 2, Box 270 telephone _____
city or town Marydel state DE zip code 19964

=====
Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).
Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.
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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 7 Page 1

Thomas' M.E. Church
Name of Property
Kent County, Delaware
County and State

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7. Physical Description
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Summary

Located near the hamlet of Chapeltown in West Dover Hundred, Delaware, Thomas' Chapel is a vernacular Greek Revival style church building surrounded by an historically associated cemetery on three sides in the predominately agricultural setting of the western section of Kent County. This small brick building was originally constructed in 1825 and was remodeled in 1877. At that time the building was reoriented toward the road, an interior balcony was removed and openings were bricked in. The building retains a high degree of architectural integrity from the 1877 time period.

Description

Thomas' Chapel is a one-story, three-bay by three-bay, gable-roofed, brick building with the gable end facing the road. The roofing material is asphalt shingle. Stylistically, the building displays the symmetry and some decorative elements of the Greek Revival style, although the ocular window and long, almost attenuated windows used throughout the building indicate the period of the major rebuilding, the last quarter of the nineteenth century.

The gable ends on the north and south elevations of the building display simple Greek Revival details of a boxed, raking cornice and gable returns. The fenestration is regular across the east and west elevations with one tall double-hung sash window per bay. The windows are unusually tall and narrow in proportion to common Greek Revival detailing. Each window retains its historic shutters. The window surround has a simple decorative scotia molding. The sills are wood and there are no lintels visible in the brickwork. The foundation vents are covered with plywood pieces.

The brick structural system is laid up in a variation of common bond (3, 4, or 5 courses of stretchers between rows of headers). Earlier brick sections display black glazed headers. This element was used to write the date 1825 in the parapet of the south (rear) elevation. The older joints on the building show evidence of tooling.

The facade (north elevation) faces the road and is arranged in symmetrical fashion with the paneled double leaf wood door and screen door flanked by the tall windows. An ocular window, outlined by header bricks is located in the center of the gable end. Underneath is a marble plaque stating "Thomas' Chapel; Built 1825; Rebuilt 1877". A newer cornerstone was placed in the lower northwest corner of the elevation and states the congregation was formed in 1779. Also in the gable end is evidence of a pair of identical window openings which were bricked in. They were used to light a balcony which was removed in the 1877 rebuilding.

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The east and west elevations are identical. They display three regularly spaced and identically detailed windows. Evidence of the 1877 rebuilding is especially evident on these elevations. The older brick walls end approximately one foot below the top of the window frames. The newer brick was laid in the same bonding pattern but is of slightly different color and does not have any black header brick. Brick, interior chimneys rise from the midpoint of these elevations.

The rear (south elevation) was changed the most during the rebuilding. Originally the front entry to the building, a small shed-roofed addition, laid in running bond was placed in the central bay of the elevation. This shallow element houses the extension of the altar area. Narrow four-pane vertical windows, located on the east and west elevations of this extension, allow light into the back altar area. Other changes to this elevation include the closing of original openings. Flanking the extension is evidence of two openings which have been filled in. The main entry was to the east of the central bay and a window was on the west side. The bricked-in sections follow the bonding patterns of the surrounding walls but are of the later brick. The gable end displays the date 1825 in black glazed headers. Evidence of change in roof pitch and height is evident in this gable end. The newer brick was pieced in around the older material.

The interior of the building is simply decorated and retains its architectural integrity from the 1877 period. The entrance into the chapel faces the altar, the elevated dais and the simply decorated arched opening behind the pulpit. This arrangement allowed the preacher to view the members of the church as they entered the room. Prior to the 1877 rebuilding the altar was located in the same spot and the congregants entered behind the preacher.

The dais is irregularly shaped. The altar and choir sections on the dais are enclosed by a heavy altar rail with turned balusters. A small table, the paneled pulpit and late nineteenth century period furnishings complete the altar furnishings.

The pew benches also date from the rebuilding and are still in use, although the original arrangement has changed. There are two lengths of benches. The original arrangement placed the long pews down the center of the room with the shorter pews along the outside forming two aisles. The long pews have a carved notch in the center, indicating the board which separated the men's and women's seating. Today they are arranged with the short and long pews interspersed throughout the seating area, forming a center aisle. The benches are simple in character, painted white with beaded details and "s" curve, carved armrests painted brown. Window surrounds repeat the simple scotia moldings from the exterior. The window sills are carved out to the arm rest profile. The pews meant to rest in these profiles have flat carved side pieces to rest flush with the wall. Today the benches are mixed throughout the space and arranged to form an aisle down the center of the room.

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Thomas' M.E. Church
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The walls are plastered. The finished plaster walls continue above the ceiling. The only decorative woodwork away from the altar area is the window trim. Currently lit with 1950s hanging lamps which were a donation from a local business, one oil burning lamp holder remains near the altar area. The ceiling was lowered in the mid-twentieth century.

Two outbuildings, both built c. 1900, exist on the site. The privy, a small, frame, gable-roofed building with vertical wood siding dates from the early part of the twentieth century. It is located approximately 45 yards southeast of the main church building and is still in use. The second structure, a combination storage shed and church event refreshment stand is of similar construction as the privy and is located directly behind the church building. Gable ends of both buildings are parallel to the street.

A stand of oak trees is located to the southeast of the present church building. It is known to members of the congregation as the site of the earlier church buildings on the site. The location has not been tested archaeologically. A pair of mature oak trees flank the entrance to the property from the road at the west end of the property. Landscaping on the rest of the site is informal. A second grove of large historic trees occurs on the west side of the property. These mature trees are mainly oak with other varieties present as well. Three cedar trees were planted in front of the church building. There may have originally been four, with two flanking the concrete steps and path leading from the road to the building. Several of the family plots have trees and other vegetation planted on them.

The Thomas' Chapel cemetery has been in use since the founding of the first church on this site in the late eighteenth century. Early graves were not marked with permanent stones. Apart from depressions in the ground, no above ground evidence of this activity exists from the earliest time period. The earliest headstone is from 1845 and markers from that time forward occur in the cemetery. The headstones tend to be simple and straightforward in design. Only three family burial plots are outlined with fences or walls. Burials continue to the present day.

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Thomas' M.E. Church
Name of Property
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8. Statement of Significance
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Summary

Thomas' Chapel, located in West Dover Hundred near the hamlet of Chapeltown is eligible for listing under Criterion C as an excellent, well-preserved example of mid-nineteenth century Methodist Episcopal church architecture in Kent County, Delaware. The building was erected in 1825 and extensively remodeled in 1877. The chapel and the Marydel Circuit which provided ministers to serve the congregation thrived through the late 19th and early 20th century but membership declined in the middle twentieth century. The Wilmington Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church withdrew their support from the building and officially closed the chapel in the early 1950s. Despite its official status, the Thomas family and other families represented on the Board of Trustees continued to maintain the church. Today, the Trustees rent the building out to an interdenominational church group which holds regular services there. An annual Methodist service and homecoming are held at the building on the fourth Sunday in October. Without the care and devotion of these people, the structure would have fallen to vandals and decay long ago.

Significance

A Christian house of worship has stood on this site since c. 1775 and was the first church built in the area that was to later become West Dover Hundred. A log structure was built as a mission for the Anglican Church by Reverend Samuel McGaw, the Anglican rector of Dover. Methodism, as a reform movement within the Church of England, was beginning to gain converts in the Delmarva Peninsula during this time period and Reverend McGaw was known to be sympathetic to the growing Methodist movement. He gave the building to the Methodist Church. Penelope Freeman, owner of the property, donated one half an acre of land to the Reverend William Thomas to be used for this purpose. The deed stipulated that trustees to be appointed by the Philadelphia Methodist Conference and that "no other doctrine but John Wesley's"¹ was to be preached. Reverend Thomas conveyed the property to a nine member board of trustees on December 24, 1779. The deed from Reverend Thomas to the nine trustees mentioned the property already had a "preaching house and chapel" existing on it.

In early records, this building was referred to as "log chapel" or "Forest Chapel". Later it was named for William Thomas, a resident of the area who held services in his home before the church was built. Reverend Thomas became an itinerant Methodist preacher, serving from 1782 until 1790. He was assigned to the Talbot (Maryland) Circuit with Reverend Freeborn Garrettson. The church records indicate that William Thomas preached at

¹Kent County Deed Book W-1:215

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Thomas' Chapel only twice, both in the late 1770s. Although it is not known precisely when he was born or when he died, Reverend Thomas is thought to have been buried in the cemetery at Thomas' Chapel². Incomplete burial records make positive location of his remains impossible.

In 1798 the log building was removed and a frame building was erected in its place. Reverend Freeborn Garrettson preached at the dedication ceremony for the fine new building. Reverend Garrettson was a well known and charismatic preacher who began life as the son of a wealthy Maryland landowner. He converted to Methodism, whose doctrine emphasized, among other things, equality through religious faith, as opposed to the Anglican system of pew rents and social stratification based on wealth. Garrettson began preaching in 1775 and he met Reverend Thomas when they were both assigned to the same circuit.

In 1825 the frame building was removed, possibly relocated and reused³ and the extant brick chapel was erected. This building was dedicated by Reverend Solomon Higgins.

Thomas' Chapel was extensively changed in 1877. According to the minutes of the Wilmington Methodist Conference in 1878 Thomas' Chapel was:

... rebuilt in modern style, the walls have been raised three feet, the old gallery removed, a recess pulpit made; in fact, every thing is new except a portion of the old walls.

No photographs or drawings of the 1825 building are known to exist. Evidence on the building gives some indication of what it must have looked like. The older brick walls end at an area below the top of the window frames. The newer brick was laid in the same bonding pattern but is of slightly different color and does not have any glazed black header bricks as the older section does. The original entrance to the building was on the south elevation which is now the rear. Evidence of the placement of former openings for a door and window opening are visible in the brickwork as is the date "1825" laid into the gable end of the south wall in black header bricks. The north elevation has evidence of two small windows in the gable end. From their position high on the elevation they must have lit the gallery which was removed during the 1877 renovation and the windows bricked in.

²Lednum, p.352.

³The building is rumored to be extant. The structure which is the subject of this discussion is now used as a storage building and is located at the southeast corner of Smith Crossroads, the next intersection to the west of Thomas' Chapel on Route 206. This structure is of appropriate age and size but further work is required to document the history of the building.

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The cemetery was established shortly after the first church was built on the property. The first burial was of a school teacher, William Dickey who came from Ireland in the early eighteenth century.⁴ Reverend William Thomas and Penelope Freeman are also thought by nineteenth century church historians to have been buried in this cemetery, as were other preachers and members of the church. Early graves did not receive permanent markers. The open area west of the church building is known to be the resting place of the earliest burials. The earliest gravestones date from the mid nineteenth century. Burial records for the cemetery are not available. Records kept by the itinerant ministers on the Marydel Circuit kept lists of deaths in the congregations and where the individuals were buried. Further analysis of these records can shed further light on the individuals buried in the cemetery.

Thomas' Chapel is a fine example of a rural building dedicated to religious worship once common throughout the state of Delaware. Today, few of these buildings remain intact due to declining attendance and abandonment by the denominations who built them. It is to the credit of the trustees of the church, especially Mr. Francis Thomas, that the building remains today, having suffered only minor vandalism problems.

Thomas' Chapel retains a high degree of architectural integrity from the 1877 rebuilding. The only change relates to the system of illumination. The electric lighting fixtures were replaced by coal oil lamps in the mid-twentieth century. The original configuration of lighting fixtures included a circular chandelier of four oil lamps which hung above the pews, a single lantern which hung over the pulpit, and two lamp holders which were located at the front corners of the room, one to light the choir area and the other to illuminate the organ area. The only original piece of this system to remain today is the lamp holder in the choir area which remains in its original location. This system was discontinued in the late 1940s when upon arrival for services, the chandelier was discovered to have fallen and broken. For several years members brought their own lighting for evening meetings at the church and shortly thereafter the Methodist Conference officially withdrew their support of the church.

The use of Greek Revival detailing on a vernacular building constructed in the late-nineteenth century is not unheard of in Delaware rural churches. The Trinity Methodist Church (S-329, NR 5/5/78) in Dublin Hill, Sussex County was built in c. 1885 and exhibits Greek Revival detailing. This seems to have been a choice of the congregation after a fire destroyed the earlier 1867 church structure. In the case of Thomas' Chapel, the building shell was used as a constraining factor in the design of the new building. The use of older and simple church design was not limited to Methodists. The Cow Marsh Old School Baptist Church (K-272, NR 6/24/76), located in Sandtown, Kent County is similar to Thomas' Chapel in design. Built of frame in 1872, this simple

⁴Scharf, p. 1090

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building shows Greek Revival influence in massing and facade arrangement but has separate entries for men and women.

Other rural congregations built new structures during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries in more contemporary styles. St. John's Methodist Church (S-3300, NR 7/23/90) near Georgetown, Delaware in Sussex County built a new building in 1907 also in the Gothic Revival style. Byrds A.M.E. Church near Camden, Delaware was built in 1894 with influences of both the Queen Anne and Gothic Revival styles.

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COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING

Zone: Upper Peninsula
Chronological Period: Industrialization and Early Urbanization
1830-1880 +/-
Theme: Religion.

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Bibliography:

Hallman, E.C., Files. "Thomas' Chapel", "Freeborn Garrettson". Collection of the Commission on Archives and History of the Peninsula Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church, Inc., Barratt's Chapel and Museum, Frederica, Delaware.

Lednum, John. A History of the Rise of Methodism in America. Philadelphia: John Lednum, 1859.

McFarland, D. Alice. "Thomas' Chapel Research", Unpublished Manuscript, 1991.

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Owen, Christopher H. "By Design: The Social Meaning of Methodist Church Architecture in Nineteenth-Century Georgia." Georgia Historical Quarterly, (v.75, #2) pp. 221-253.

Scharf, John Thomas. History of Delaware, 1609-1988. Philadelphia: L.J. Richards and Co., 1888.

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Todd, Rev. Robert. Methodism on the Peninsula. Philadelphia: Methodist Episcopal Book Rooms, 1886.

Williams, William H. Garden of American Methodism: The Delmarva Peninsula 1769-1820. Dover, DE: Scholarly Resources, Inc., 1984.

Zebley, Frank R. Churches of Delaware. Wilmington, DE: Frank R. Zebley, 1947.

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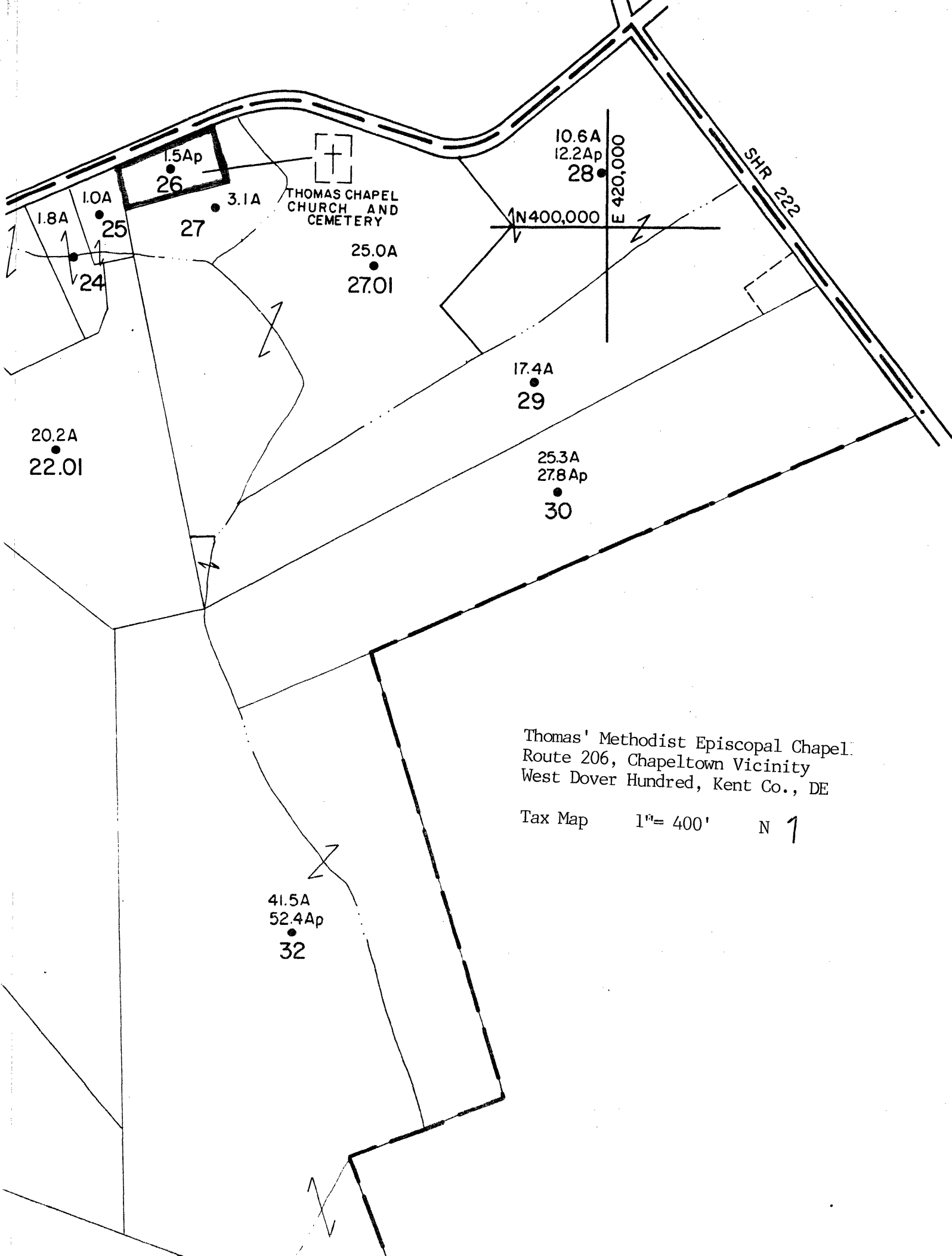
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10. Geographical Data
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Verbal Boundary Description:

The nominated property is a 1.5 acre parcel bounded on the north by the property boundary along Route 206 and on the east, south and west by adjoining property lines. It is described as parcel WD-99.00-02-26.00 on Kent County Property map dated June 30, 1977 revised May 1993.

Boundary Justification:

This boundary includes all property historically associated with Thomas' Chapel and associated resources, including the original half acre donation by Penelope Freeman and the subsequent land additions upon which the present building sits and those which expanded the cemetery.



THOMAS CHAPEL
CHURCH AND
CEMETERY

SHR 222

N 400,000
E 420,000

20.2A
22.01

1.8A
1.0A
24
25

1.5Ap
26
27
3.1A

25.0A
27.01

17.4A
29

25.3A
27.8Ap
30

41.5A
52.4Ap
32

Thomas' Methodist Episcopal Chapel
Route 206, Chapeltown Vicinity
West Dover Hundred, Kent Co., DE

Tax Map 1" = 400' N 1