

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

For NPS use only

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

received **JUL 23 1986**
date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Churchville Presbyterian Church

and/or common Churchville Presbyterian Church

2. Location

street & number State Routes 22 and 136 N/A not for publication

city, town Churchville N/A vicinity of First Congressional District

state Maryland code 24 county Harford code 025

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> not applicable	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Trustees of the Churchville Presbyterian Church

street & number P. O. Box 8

city, town Churchville N/A vicinity of state Maryland 21028

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Harford County Courthouse

street & number South Main Street

city, town Bel Air state Maryland 21014

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

Maryland Historical Trust

title Historic Sites Inventory has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1985 federal state county local

depository for survey records Maryland Historical Trust, 21 State Circle

city, town Annapolis state Maryland 21401

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date <u> N/A </u>
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

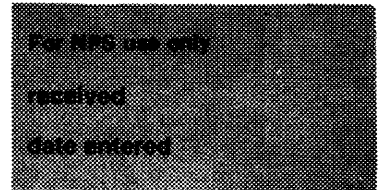
Number of Resources		Number of previously listed
Contributing	Noncontributing	National Register properties
<u> 1 </u>	<u> 0 </u> buildings	included in this nomination: <u> 0 </u>
<u> 0 </u>	<u> 0 </u> sites	
<u> 0 </u>	<u> 0 </u> structures	Original and historic functions
<u> 0 </u>	<u> 0 </u> objects	and uses: religious
<u> 1 </u>	<u> 0 </u> Total	

SUMMARY DESCRIPTION:

The Churchville Presbyterian Church is located in - and forms the nucleus of - Churchville, a community in central Harford County, Maryland. The building and its churchyard fill the northwest corner of Maryland Routes 22 and 136. The church faces east; its south wall parallels Route 22 and is separated from that road by an original (1830) fieldstone wall. Basically, the church consists of three harmoniously designed sections, which together suggest the evolutionary nature of the congregation's growth during the past 240 years. The original (1820) one-story, four-bay-by-three-bay (50'x 40') gable roof brick building forms the core and exactly matches in scale and window treatment specifications in the 1820 contract between church elders and craftsman. In 1870, the congregation added a three-story, restrained Italianate, brick bell tower, designed by J. Crawford Neilson of the reknowned Baltimore firm, Niernsee and Neilson. They also hired local cabinetmaker William Shuck to build the present pulpit, pews, and wainscoting. In 1950, Bel Air architects Alexander Shaw and W. Kendall Duff designed a low, one-story brick church hall and office to the west; this final addition is clearly subordinate to the two older sections and complements them both in scale, style, and color. The church is set off by particularly attractive grounds which include the already-mentioned stone wall as well as herringbone patterned brick walks, a large obelisk (a memorial erected in 1874 to the church's first pastor, William Finney), and a shady, sequestered 4.5 acre graveyard with stones dating back to 1819.

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GENERAL DESCRIPTION:

This brick church, begun in 1820, is located on the northwest corner of the intersection of Churchville Road and Calvary Road (State Routes 22 and 136 respectively) in Harford County, Maryland. The simple, restrained brick structure dominates the surrounding flat countryside, particularly the village of Churchville, which grew up around it. Indeed, the village took its very name from the church.

The main block of the church, dating from c. 1820, is a one-story rectangle measuring four bays by three bays (50' x 40') set on a low rubble foundation and sheltered by a moderately pitched slate covered gable roof. The roof ridge runs east-west. The church's south wall, fronting and paralleling Churchville Road, is laid in Flemish bond while the other walls are laid in four course common bond. Four original round-arched windows are regularly placed and pierce the north and south facades: the openings measure roughly 7'10" by 3'6" and rest on granite sills while a soldier course of brick tops and defines each arch.

No architect's name is associated with this straight-forward structure, but the church's remarkably complete early records show that on August 15, 1820, the congregation's elders contracted with "Elijah Walton, Carpenter" of New London in Chester County, Pennsylvania, to "build and complete said church...agreeably to the plan and schedule hereunto annexed:" those specifications call for a building "50 feet long and forty feet wide, walls to be built of Brick 15 feet High from the foundation & 18 inches thick...The cornice to be of brick...The tops of the windows and doors (except for the front) to be circular."

Later that year a memorandum of agreement between Walton and the elders calls for the craftsman (who was clearly more than just a "carpenter") to finish the interior with three coats of plaster ("the last of which is to finished White") and specifies that Walton is to "make & fix the sash for 8 windows." The church was completed in February, 1821 and the old structure's dimensions, walls (exterior and interior), and window openings have remained basically unchanged since that date.

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GENERAL DESCRIPTION (continued)

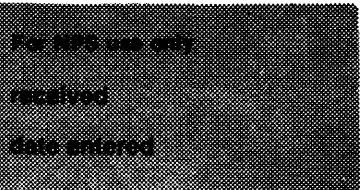
In 1870, the congregation had grown wealthier and sought to express this wealth by adding to their church. They had presumably not increased in numbers -- there was no attempt to enlarge the seating area - merely in affluence. Thus they decided to leave the old building alone but to make it more visible from afar and J. Crawford Neilson, of Neirnsee & Neilson, volunteered a design for a new tower and for a new interior. The tower is three stories tall, and faces the village. The tower is markedly higher than the old roof's ridge and can be seen, in this flat land, for some distance. It was, however, designed to blend with the old meeting house: its brick walls are, in bonding pattern and color, in keeping with the walls of the original section and its round-arched openings (the one ground story window and the eight third-story louvered belfry openings) are clearly meant to echo the round-arched windows built by Walton in 1820. A beltcourse defines each level of the tower, and the whole is topped by a shallow pitched hip roof marked by a restrained dentil cornice. On the ground floor, the tower is visually braced by shed roof vestibules to the north and south; these shelter the two east-facing double doors to the interior.

Neilson also directed the reglazing of the original windows, keeping the windows' shape but replacing the clear glass with the colored, diamond-shaped panes that still exist today.

Inside, the elders also commissioned new furniture in 1870 and it is arranged to correspond to the 1870 door placement. Neilson placed the two aisles so that they lead from the doors; the pulpit is located in the center of the west wall on a raised platform within a shallow apse. The apse gets light from a multi-colored oculus and two narrow round-arched windows.

The local cabinetmaker, William Shuck, whose shop still stands 1 1/4 miles west of the church at Shuck's Corner, is credited with creating the pews and pulpit, as well as the three-foot beaded wainscotting present on all four walls. the pews are enriched with roundels on the armrests and with a cloverleaf inset at the base.

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GENERAL DESCRIPTION (continued)

To the south of the pulpit, a door leads to the low, 1950, one-story gable roof addition, built to house classrooms, and auditorium, and the church offices. This new section was intentionally made subordinate to the two older sections and harmonizes with them thanks to careful choice of brick and sensitive attention to scale.

Outside, the 4.7-acre church grounds are pleasingly and informally landscaped in box, yew and ivy and are shaded by venerable elms and oaks. There is an extensive graveyard to the north containing stones dating from 1819 to the present, a constant, visible reminder of the generations of prominent countians who have been continuously associated with the church. Thirty feet east of the tower is a large granite obelisk erected in 1874 as a memorial to the church's first pastor, the Rev. William T. Finney. Herringbone brick walks transverse the grounds and the entire complex is enclosed by 1830s fieldstone walls which protect this quiet spot from the cars and trucks that barrel along the highways to the east and south.

8. Significance

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Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> social/
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates 1820; 1870 **Builder/Architect** Elijah Walton (1820);
 J. Crawford Neilson (1870)

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Applicable Criteria: B, C
 Applicable Exceptions: A
 Significance Evaluated: local

SIGNIFICANCE SUMMARY:

The Churchville Presbyterian Church is significant for three reasons: its architecture, its influence on community planning (particularly for its intimate connection with generations of families who have had a powerful influence on the development of Harford County), and for its religious history. Architecturally, it is important in part because the original (1820) section is the oldest Presbyterian Church in the county, in part because the 1870 additions (J. Crawford Neilson's tower and William Shuck's interior wood-work) were the work of an important architect and a prominent local craftsman, respectively, and in part because overall, the church's restrained style so typifies building in this conservative, rural part of the state. Secondly, the church has been, since its construction, the vital focus for this part of the county: indeed the community of Churchville, which surrounds the church, grew up around and took its name from the structure - village and church have evolved together in a mutually beneficial manner. The building's power over the town is visual, of course, but it is more importantly psychologically, the powerful result of the numerous parishioners - theologians, politicians, farmers, doctors, entrepreneurs, and educators - who were instrumental in founding the church, who have remained active in the congregation to this day, and who have exerted far-reaching influence on all aspects of the community's life. Finally, the Churchville Presbyterian Church derives significance as the place of worship for parishioners who make up the earliest Presbyterian congregation (1738) in Harford County and among the earliest of any denomination anywhere in Maryland.

For History and Support, see Continuation Sheet No. 4

9. Major Bibliographical References

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See Continuation Sheet No. 11

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property 4.5 acres

Quadrangle name Bel Air, MD

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

A

1	8	3	9	2	3	8	0	4	3	7	9	3	9	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

B

Zone		Easting				Northing								

C

Zone		Easting				Northing								

D

Zone		Easting				Northing								

E

Zone		Easting				Northing								

F

Zone		Easting				Northing								

G

Zone		Easting				Northing								

H

Zone		Easting				Northing								

Verbal boundary description and justification See attached portion of Harford County Tax Map 42; the defined acreage has remained intact since the enclosing walls were put up c. 1830. The property consists only of the village lot upon which the resource stands.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state N/A code county code

state code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Christopher Weeks

organization Harford County Planning & Zoning Dept. date March 1, 1986

street & number 220 South Main Street telephone (301) 838-6000, ext. 207

city or town Bel Air state Maryland 21014

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature *[Signature]* date 7-22-86

title STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER date

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I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

[Signature] Entered in the National Register date 8-21-86
Keeper of the National Register

Attest: date

Chief of Registration

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HISTORY AND SUPPORT

When the Harford County government designated the Churchville Presbyterian Church as one of the original 12 Harford County Landmarks in 1979, they explained their decision by noting that "the Churchville Presbyterian Church marks the psychological center of Harford County". While such a statement may suggest hyperbole, examination of the history of the building - the clergy and the congregation who worshipped here, the architects and craftsmen who built so well in brick and good and glass - will suggest that it is not hyperbole at all, it is merely fact.

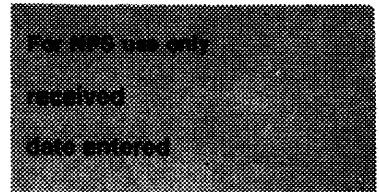
The Churchville Presbyterian Church's congregation, the oldest in Harford County, dates back to 1738, when it was chartered as the Deer Creek Presbyterian Congregation and was supplied by the Donegal Presbytery. Those early worshippers met, according to church records, in a log structure on Graveyard Branch, about two miles northeast of the present building. The congregation relocated to its now-permanent site in 1759 and built themselves a simple brick meeting house. But various issues began to divide the congregation into splinter groups of ever-decreasing importance; this unfortunate situation was worsened by the absence of any minister for 25 years.

This decline was reversed, however, when the Rev. William T. Finney (1789-1873; B.A. Princeton, 1809) came to the parish. Finney was a native of New London in Chester County, Pennsylvania, where two of the Deer Creek's elders heard him preach in October, 1812. The Marylanders were so impressed that they asked the young man to come to Harford and he agreed, being installed here on November 17, 1813. Finney revived the dying parish and caused the main block of the present church to be built.

The church archives are remarkably complete and allow a precise recreation of the construction process. There is a plan (attached) and three contracts, all dated at various times in the summer of 1820. On August 26, 1820, a committee "charged with overseeing the building of a new church" and consisting in part of Finney, Benjamin Silver II, Reuben H. Davis, and James Pannell, hired Daniel McNabb "to take down the present old meeting house". The terms of the contract support the local tradition that much of the

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HISTORY AND SUPPORT (continued)

1820 structure was made of 1750s materials: McNabb was to dismantle the old building, taking "care and attention as to prevent the destruction or injury of any of the materials, the Pews to be taken out and piled away in the graveyard, the Sash to be put in W. James Herbert's house, the brick and stone to be well cleaned of mortar and piled up ready for replacing, the nails to be taken care of and given to W. James Herbert's care...". McNabb was also charged with digging the trenches for a new foundation ("two feet wide, two feet six inches deep, for a house of fifty feet long by forty feet wide") for the new church. He was not to dally and had to have the jobs done by "Monday the 11th day of September" so that "progressing with the [new] building" would not be delayed.

And the committee was all set to progress on the new building. On August 15th, they had entered into contract with one Elijah Walton, "Carpenter, of the Township of New London in the County of Chester, State of Pennsylvania" to "build and complete said church under the direction of said committee". (It seems likely in the extreme that Finney, a native of New London, knew of Walton's work and suggested him to the other committeemen, but this has not been proven.) Walton was to work "agreeably to the plan and schedule hereunto annexed" and the specifications for the stone foundation, brick walls, and circular windows exactly match what is present in the gable roof section of the present structure. (See description.)

James Pannell's diary, in the archives of the Historical Society of Harford County, notes that on "Tuesday the 29th of August 1820: commenced pulling down the old home." Then on "Tuesday the 12th Sept. 1820: the cornerstone of the new church was laid, Elijah Walton, undertaker." A few weeks later "11th October: the masons finishing their work" and "18th October: the carpenters had the church covered." By "the 5th of November 1820, in the new church the congregation assembled for divine worship, Mr. Finney preached."

The meeting apparently took place in an unfinished structure because the second contract between the Elders and Walton (dated November 27, 1820) calls for Walton to finish the interior "of the Presbyterian Meeting House lately built at the lower crossroads" in, again, a very specific manner. But the committee was taking no chances and added, just in case, that "should there have been any thing omitted to be mentioned, no advantage thereof is to be taken by said Walton, it being understood that he is to finish said house

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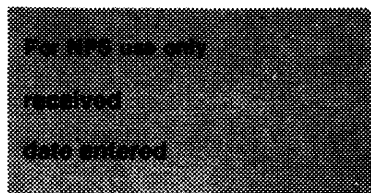
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HISTORY AND SUPPORT (continued)

in a good, complete, and workmanlike manner and the materials to be seasoned, of good quality and the different materials well suited to their different purposes. The whole to be completed by the first of April next".

In 1850 Finney preached a history-tinged sermon and gave his account of the proceedings. He said that the old (1758) church "had no covering above but the naked roof and was utterly destitute of anything like taste or comfort or convenience. During the first seven years of my relation to this church we worshipped in that old, dilapidated building. It was taken down in 1820 and the house we now occupy was finished in the fall of 1821 at an expense of \$1,791, no part of which sum was contributed outside of the congregation...."

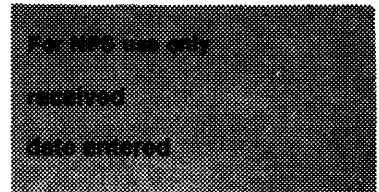
The cast of characters is worth examining. Finney, the Pennsylvanian, founded a dynasty of public-spirited Marylanders: these include his son, the Rev. Ebenezer Finney, who became the first pastor of the newly-built First Presbyterian Church in Bel Air (1852 - National Register). Ebenezer's son, Dr. John M.T. Finney, was among the first (1889) surgeons to join the staff of the embryonic Johns Hopkins Hospital and "in 1939 he presided at the 50th Anniversary of Johns Hopkins Hospital, and was one of the three remaining physicians who had participated at its opening.... He died in 1942 and was buried at Churchville Presbyterian cemetery." (Wright 408)

Reuben H. Davis was the first (1814) principal of the Bel Air Academy and was cofounder (1831) of the Harford County Alms House. Harford historian, C. Milton Wright, wrote "credit is due him for the organization and success of the first community academy in Harford County. He was recognized as an able scholar, and under his tutelage many professional leaders received their basic education.... He died in 1835 at the age of 47 and was buried in the Churchville Presbyterian cemetery". (p.407)

While little is known of Elijah Walton's later activities, Daniel McNabb, the man hired to dismantle carefully the 1750s meeting house, resembles Finney in fathering a family of public servants including his son, J. Martin McNabb, who represented Harford County in the House of Delegates where he introduced the first bill in Maryland for free public school textbooks.

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HISTORY AND SUPPORT (continued)

Finally, Benjamin Silver II (1782-1847) was a leading early Victorian entrepreneur, whose field of activity covered all of eastern Harford County, from the Deer Creek Valley to the Chesapeake Bay. To quote the National Register nomination for the Silver Houses Historic District,

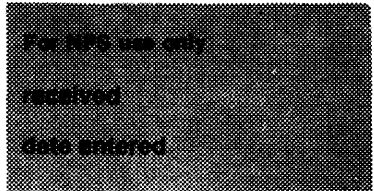
He entered the fishing business at an early age and eventually extended his fishing operation from the Susquehanna River across the head of Chesapeake Bay, becoming very successful and acquiring great wealth. He had a desire for land and owned several of the small islands in the Susquehanna River just south of the mouth of Deer Creek as bases for his fisheries. The 1878 Martenet map of Harford County shows the present Robert Island as Silver Island. Benjamin II also bought Snake Island (now Wood Island) in 1805. Living on rented farms or with relatives until 1812, Benjamin finally bought 260 acres of the Mary's Lot tract from John B. Bayless and Platt Whitaker. After serving in the militia in the War of 1812 in which he participated in the defense of Baltimore, Benjamin devoted his time to developing his farm and fisheries and to acquiring more property. At the time of his death in 1847, he owned about 1,352 acres.

Benjamin was interested in improved methods of farming and used fish pickle from his fisheries as a fertilizer. He also used bone meal, guano, and wood ash, experimenting to find the best fertilizer for his wheat, corn and clover crops and for cattle grazing lands. Benjamin was an advocate of education and actively supported the building of local schoolhouses. The most prominent local school after 1817 was the Prospect School, built as a log school on a hill near the present Darlington Road about one-half mile south of where Harmony Church now stands. Benjamin, Zephaniah Bayless, Amos Silver, and others helped build and support the school.... Benjamin was an active supporter ... of the Churchville Presbyterian Church.

A few years later the elders formed a Wall Committee: the church archives contain a receipt dated October 4, 1830,

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HISTORY AND SUPPORT (continued)

for \$10 "on acc't of building the wall in front of the Presbyterian Meeting House at Herbert's Cross Roads" and a bill dated September 19, 1831, for "hauling seven loads of cap stone to the wall ... in front of the Presbyterian Church".

Finney served as Pastor of the Churchville Presbyterian Church for 41 years, until October 4, 1854. For some time he had divided his activities between the Churchville church and a chapel of ease built in 1837 to more conveniently serve the parishioners who lived in the Darlington area. (This new building is Deer Creek Harmony Church; the present church, built in 1870, is a designated Harford County Landmark and is a contributing part of the Silver Houses National Register Historic District.)

A series of short-term rectors followed Finney until 1870 when the Rev. John R. Paxton assumed the ministry. Paxton's "personal magnetism and original style of preaching gave new life to the congregation" and during his tenure "much was accomplished" including building a memorial for Finney. When that obelisk was dedicated in 1874, Paxton spoke eloquently of his predecessor:

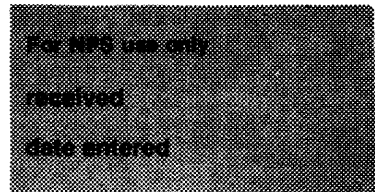
Here he was known and loved by fathers and sons, mothers and daughters, during 60 years. Mr. Finney belongs to Harford County particularly. His memory is a trust confided to her people...Mr. Finney lived for Harford County, for his people here, for the welfare of this community in temporal, moral, spiritual and intellectual concerns....

His monument is here, deep in the hearts of all who knew and loved him; and we erect that marble shaft to simply testify to the love we bear his memory and to perpetuate to our children the name and memory of one who loved and lived for their fathers and mothers.

Rev. Paxton also oversaw a remodeling of the 1820 church. And, while the archival record is not as complete for the 1870 remodeling as it is for the initial construction. Still, it is clear enough. In March and April, 1870, the elders of the parish debated whether they should build a totally new church or repair and add to the 1820 structure.

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HISTORY AND SUPPORT (continued)

To decide, they went right to the top: on August 6 of that year, the Elders' minutes reveal that a new Building Committee met "at the request of J.C. Neilson, Esq.," and talked with that noted architect "in regard to repairing the present building." The same day "arrangements were made by which a plan for repairing the present building will be submitted by Mr. Neilson to the congregation for their consideration." Neilson worked quickly, for on August 9 "after considerable discussion it was resolved that we adopt the plan known as Plan No. 2 of Neirnsee and Neilson...that

there be a bell tower or belfry in the center of the east end." Masons were hired and on March 25, 1871, the Committee met and "on motion" was "fully discharged with the thanks of the congregation for their labor and troubles well as the ability displayed in the discharge of their duties." They also "Resolved: that we hereby tender our thanks to J.C. Neilson, Esq., for his kind and gratuitous services rendered in planning the repairs to the church."

Neilson's bell tower, built of brick in a restrained Italianate style, blends perfectly with the old meeting house. But this should be no surprise for Neilson (who lived near Churchville) was, arguably, the finest Maryland architect of his day. John Dorsey and James Dilts wrote in their Guide to Baltimore Architecture that the firm Neirnsee and Neilson "was the largest and most successful architectural firm in Baltimore. Although much of their work has subsequently disappeared, the list of what remains is impressive." In Harford County, "the list" includes the Harford County Courthouse in Bel Air (1858; National Register). In Baltimore it includes what is generally regarded as one of the finest townhouses in America, 1 West Mount Vernon Place (1851) and the Romanesque old YMCA Building (1873). Most of Neirnsee and Neilson's Baltimore churches predate the project in Churchville and these number Grace and St. Peter's (1852), St. Luke's (1853), Emmanuel Episcopal (1855), and the Greenmount Cemetary Chapel (1856); their St. John the Evangelist (1856) was done in the Italianate style and displays several motifs later used in Churchville. Wilbur Harvey Hunter commented that the firm also expertly used the Italianate style "for the Calvert Street railroad station and the great Winans country house, Alexandrofsky. The last two are no longer standing."

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HISTORY AND SUPPORT (continued)

Thus, Neilson's Churchville bell tower is an important example of a highly important Maryland architect working in a favored style at the full maturity of his career. Alexandrofsky and the Calvert Street Station have been torn down, but the Churchville Church still stands and occupies a firm place in Neilson's oeuvre, fitting in--chronologically and stylistically--between 1 West Mount Vernon Place and the YMCA Building.

To re-outfit their enlarged church, the committee chose a well-known son of Harford, the cabinetmaker William Shuck. Shuck's house and store still stand at Shuck's Corner, about 1 1/4 miles west of Churchville. He selected black walnut for the church's new furniture and his well-designed pews and pulpit add to the building's overall air of straightforward dignity. Shuck is known to have built strikingly similar furniture for the nearby Holy Trinity Episcopal Church and there are many pieces of cabinetry in Harford County attributed to him.

Neilson's restrained Italianate tower served two purposes and still serves them well: it adds great interest to the church's silhouette (yet it blends in well with the 1820 main body of the church) and it emphatically orients the church to the crossroads community that grew up around the venerable building. Indeed, the village owes its very name to the church: records in Finney's day, as has been shown, refer to this site rather imprecisely, sometimes as "the lower crossroads", sometimes as "Herbert's Crossroads". But a generation later, in 1858, the engineers Jennings and Herrick published a "Map of Harford County" on which they label the village "Churchville" and show that it had developed into quite a community, with a dozen houses and a hotel. By 1877, Gray's "New Map of Churchville" definitely shows the church, with its then-new tower pointed directly at the cross roads that from Churchville and that lead to Bel Air, Aberdeen and Havre de Grace. Gray's map shows how the church clearly forms the heart of a community that had grown to include the early houses as well as a public school, carriage shop and blacksmith shop.

Finney himself noted this change in an 1850 sermon.

It ought to be s subject of thankfulness that these hallowed walls, unscathed by the storms and sunshine of fifty years, are yet a standing memorial of the zeal and liberality of your fathers and they stand to-day as silent sentinels beside their graves...

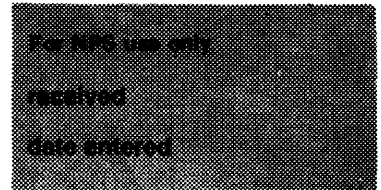
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National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form



Churchville Presbyterian Church
Continuation sheet Harford County, Maryland Item number 8 and 9 Page 11

HISTORY AND SUPPORT (continued)

In the long span of fifty years we have witnessed in the surroundings of this house a multitude of changes....The country around us has undergone an immense improvement. The wilderness has blossomed and the solitary places have been made glad. The waste, unenclosed and uncultivated fields that fifty years ago presented a prospect as discouraging and unattractive, flourished now....The spirit of improvement has thrown off the slumbers of a hundred years and the pleasant results meet us at every turn....

In 1931, J. Alexis Shriver, serving under appointment to the Governor of Maryland, began placing historical markers throughout Harford County. In Churchville, his marker notes that the community was "Earlier known as Lower Cross Roads" but was renamed to honor "the first Presbyterian Church in Harford". (Wright 434)

Finally, when the Churchville Presbyterian Church celebrated its 150th anniversary, the Baltimore Sunpapers took notice, commenting that "the Churchville church has in interesting history, very obscure in its early days, not praiseworthy in some periods, but holding its position in the midst of adverse circumstances...Though never large in membership, the old church is the mother of several other churches distributed in the most promising parts of Maryland for the growth of Presbyterianism. The influence of this church throughout the county has been marked, and it comes to its one hundred and fiftieth anniversary with a consciousness that it has been a blessing far and wide...."

MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES:

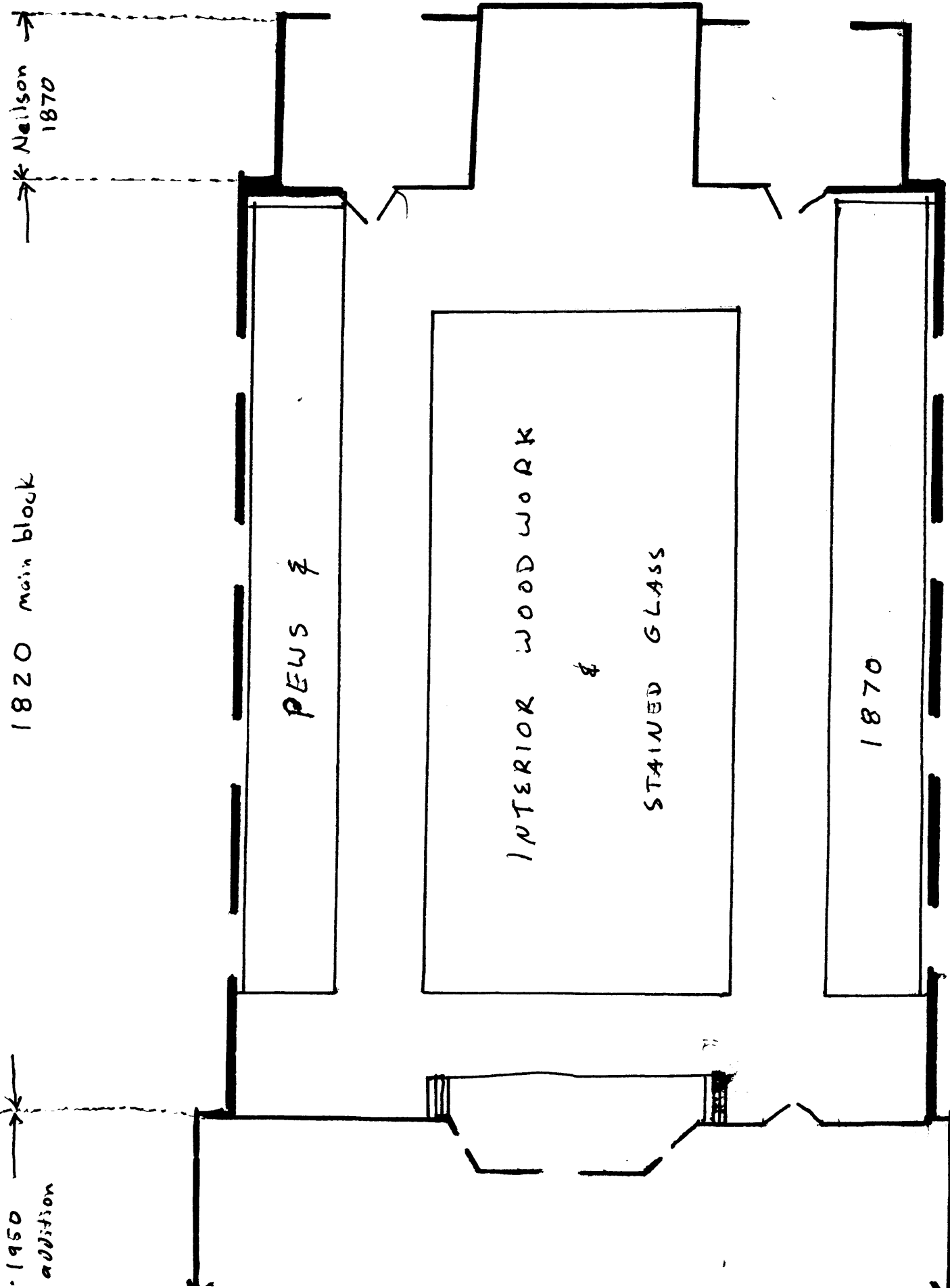
Primary Sources: Records of the trustees of the Churchville Presbyterian Church from c. 1740 to date. Verticle files of the Harford County Historical Society.

Secondary Sources: John Dorsey & James D. Dilts, A Guide to Baltimore Architecture (Centreville, Md.: Tidewater Publishers; 2nd ed., 1981).

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C. Milton Wright, Our Harford Heritage, (Bel Air, privately published, 1967).

Churchville Presbyterian Church
Harford County
Not to Scale



1820 main block

1950 addition

Neilson 1870

PEWS &

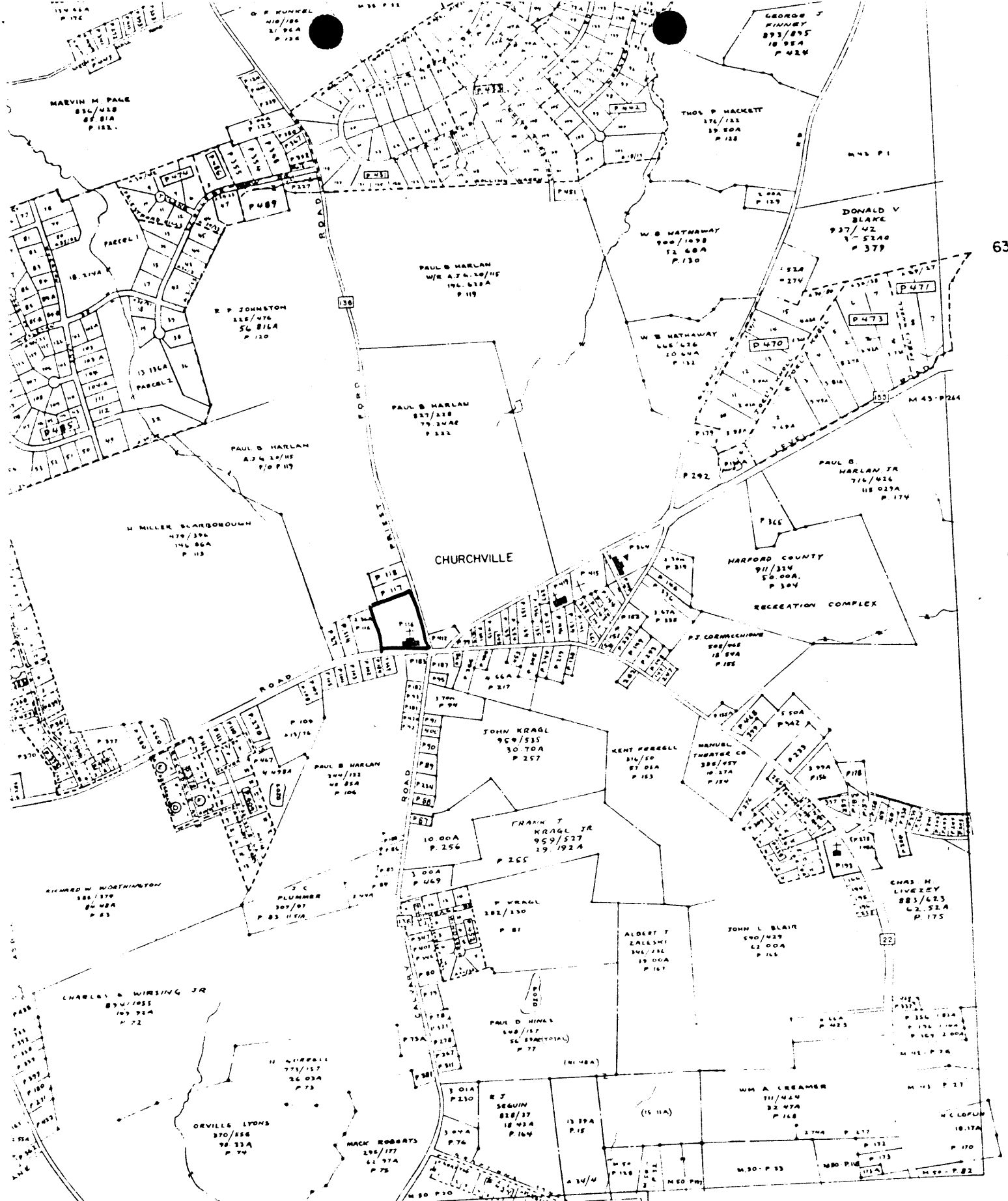
INTERIOR WOOD WORK

& STAINED GLASS

1870

1870

1950

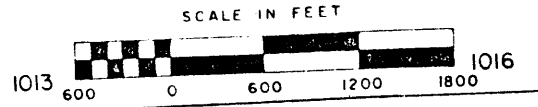


DEPT. OF ASSESSMENTS & TAXATION
TAX MAP DIVISION

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DATE
REVISOR

PROPERTY LINE
SUB-DIVISION BOUNDARY
CONTINUING OWNERSHIP
PARCEL NUMBER

SCALE: 1" = 600'
BY
LAST NO.
PHOTO
QUADRANGLE



1007

HARFORD COUNTY
MAP 42

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998-