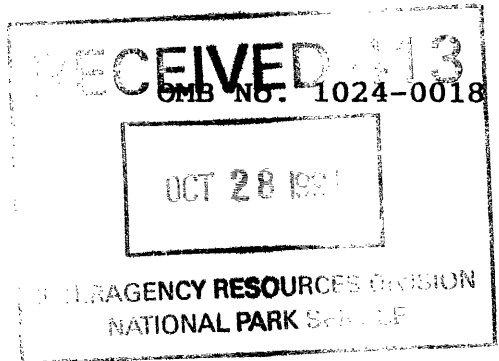


NPS Form 10-900  
(Rev. 10-90)



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

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 Star Hill AME Church

other names/site number Star of the East Church; K-3581

2. Location

street & number Road 360 not for publication   
city or town Camden vicinity   
state Delaware code DE county Kent code 001  
zip code 19901

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this  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  locally. (  See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

*David R. Hoff* October 25, 1994  
Signature of certifying official 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

=====

**4. National Park Service Certification**

=====

I, hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register  
See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register  
See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register

Edson H. Beall      11.25.94

other (explain): \_\_\_\_\_

Entered in the  
National Register

for Signature of Keeper      Date  
of Action

=====

**5. Classification**

=====

Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)

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

Category of Property (Check only one box)

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

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	buildings
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>2</u>	<u>1</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

Name of related multiple property listing (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.) N/A

\_\_\_\_\_

=====

6. Function or Use

=====

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Category: <u>Religion</u>	Sub: <u>religious facility</u>
<u>Funerary</u>	<u>cemetery</u>
<u>Social</u>	<u>meeting hall</u>
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Category: <u>Religion</u>	Sub: <u>religious facility</u>
<u>Funerary</u>	<u>cemetery</u>
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

=====

7. Description

=====

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

Other: Vernacular Gothic Revival

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation	<u>concrete block</u>
roof	<u>asphalt shingle</u>
walls	<u>aluminum siding</u>
other	_____
	_____

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

=====

**8. Statement of Significance**

=====

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

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

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

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

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture  
Ethnic Heritage: Black  
Social History  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Period of Significance 1866-1945  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Significant Dates 1866  
1905  
\_\_\_\_\_

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.)

=====

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

=====

(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: \_\_\_\_\_

=====

**10. Geographical Data**

=====

Acreage of Property 1.6 acres

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

		Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
1	<u>18</u>	<u>453650</u>	<u>4328000</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.)

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

name/title Robin K. Bodo, Historian  
organization DE State Historic Preservation Office date June 15, 1994  
street & number 15 The Green telephone (302) 739-5685  
city or town Dover state DE zip code 19901

=====  
**Additional Documentation**  
=====

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. Nelson Driqgus, Head Trustee; Star Hill AME Church  
street & number RD 1, Box 345 telephone (302) 697-9265  
city or town Dover state DE zip code 19901

=====  
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  
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7. PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

SUMMARY

Located in the community of Star Hill in North Murderkill Hundred, Kent County, Delaware, the Star Hill African Methodist Episcopal Church is a frame, vernacular interpretation of the Gothic Revival style. It may have been constructed c. 1866 but most of the visible historic fabric in the building dates from the late-nineteenth to early-twentieth century. While the sanctuary suffered a fire in 1905 which destroyed the interior balcony, much of the historic interior was saved. The church retains a high degree of integrity from this period, despite the relatively recent application of synthetic siding. Originally sited without any additions, the church building now has a three-bay wide wing, set to the west of the church and connected by a two bay-wide frame hyphen. The historically associated cemetery is located on the nominated parcel to the east of the church building.

DESCRIPTION

The Star Hill AME Church is a one-story, three-bay by three-bay, gable-roofed, frame building in a vernacular interpretation of the Gothic Revival style. The church building is supported on a series of brick piers, enhanced by a concrete block parged foundation wall. A small bell tower crowns the facade (south elevation) at the roof ridge. The entry is covered by a small, one-bay vestibule with a gable roof. Above the entry, in the gable end, was an ocular window, with a decorative muntin pattern in the shape of a star. This feature has been obscured by aluminum siding but remains in good condition according to the buildings primary caretaker, Mr. Nelson Driggus. The gable end faces the road and the building is sited close to it.

The east elevation is three bays wide with each bay indicated by a four-over-four double-hung sash wood window with the upper sash modified to form a triangular pointed arch. The panes of glass in each window in the sanctuary are multi-colored.

The north (rear) elevation is three bays wide with a projecting central bay to accommodate the apse. A narrow wood double-hung sash window, used to light this area, occur on the east and west sides of this shed roofed, projecting bay. This projecting bay is flanked by full-sized decorative windows, identical to those found on the rest of the building.

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The west elevation is similarly detailed as the east elevation, with identical window placements. The north bay of this elevation is enclosed by a two bay-wide hyphen, constructed in the 1970s. This hyphen houses the pastor's study, rest room facilities, a second entrance into the sanctuary located near the alter area and connects the former Odd Fellows Hall building, now social hall, to the church. The entrance to the hyphen has recently been made handicapped accessible with the placement of a concrete ramp along the west side of the church building.

The interior of the church is open in plan. A chair rail, separating decorative vertical board wainscotting below and flat plaster above, occurs throughout the room. The ceiling was lowered c. 1960 to conserve heat and suspend fans and lamps. The original ceiling remains above. The window and door surrounds have decorative molding and corner blocks. The historic double, paneled wood door exists and is protected from the elements by the vestibule. The original tongue and groove pine flooring remains as do the stove chimneys, located at middle of the east and west walls, which breast into the room. The dais is located along the north wall and projecting out into the room. It is constructed with decorative beaded boards and supports a historic alter rail. Alter furniture and pews were replaced in the 1960s but many of the original pieces have been reused throughout the building. Two of the original simple board pews remain along the south wall of the church, one is used in the hyphen and another is located in the social hall. A wood six paneled single door is in the opening cut into the sanctuary from the hyphen.

The wing attached to the hyphen was constructed as a separate building c. 1843. Originally constructed as a two-story, two-bay by three-bay, frame, gable-roofed building in the mid-nineteenth century, it was used primarily as an Odd Fellows Hall but other community functions were held there as well. It also may have been used as the Quaker school which is known to have been on the site in the mid-nineteenth century. At some point in the early-twentieth century the second story was removed, probably at the time the Odd Fellows abandoned the building. It was moved in 1962 from its original location, west of the church with the gable end facing the road, to its current orientation and was enlarged to twice its width in 1986. Historic exterior fabric of the structure which remain include: all three bays on the south elevation retain their six-over-six double-hung sash wood windows; the east (formerly the facade) elevation retains a historic single-leaf, paneled, wood door and simple surround; the south side of the west elevation, which is now enclosed in the pastor's study, contains an identical window to the ones



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on the south elevation. The interior of this building is one big open space with a series of support columns indicating the original width of the space. Two small rooms have been partitioned off along the west wall which serve as a kitchen and storage space, respectively. This element is non-contributing because of the physical changes it has sustained through time.

The burials in the cemetery associated with the Star Hill Church were located to the east side of the building. Many of the burials are marked with simple headstones made of stone or concrete. Depressions in the ground are the only marker for some of the burials. Interments were believed to begin with the founding of the church in the 1860s, but the earliest marked grave dates from the early 1890s.

The community of Star Hill, at one time consisted of scattered residences along the road with agricultural lands continuing to the north and south of the community. Today, the church and cemetery are surrounded by housing developments and trailers. The majority of the historic buildings in Star Hill have been demolished. The few that remain have been significantly changed over time and, although have not been individually evaluated, appear to no longer retain their architectural integrity.

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8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

SUMMARY

The Star Hill African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church is located in the community of Star Hill, south of the village of Camden in North Murderkill Hundred, Delaware. This resource is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A as an important focal point of the community of Star Hill, an early community of African American settlement in Kent County. It is also eligible under Criterion C as a well-preserved example of late nineteenth-early twentieth century church architecture as expressed by the African Methodist Episcopal church in Kent County, Delaware. The Star Hill AME Church and its associated cemetery provide the only physical reminder of the majority of the members of the Star Hill community, as the intense development in the area since the middle of the twentieth century has obliterated the majority of the historic fabric in the community.

SIGNIFICANCE

The Founding of the Community of Star Hill

The community of Star Hill is a triangular shaped area covering approximately twenty acres of land in the northern section of North Murderkill Hundred. Two small creeks, Newells Branch and Tidbury Branch, which runs behind the church, flow into a mill pond which powered Ezekiel Nock's mill, now called Voshell's mill (extant, but converted to a residence) on Road 361.

Star Hill was settled by free blacks on land obtained with the assistance of the Camden Quaker community in the late eighteenth century. A Quaker school for the education of the African American children was established in Star Hill in the early nineteenth century. Star Hill residents who were members of the AME church attended services in nearby Camden at the Zion AME Church (This building was recently proposed for listing in the National Register). In 1863 a split in the congregation caused the formation of the Star Hill AME Church, also known as The Star of the East Church.

The African Methodist Episcopal Church

The African Methodist Episcopal Church has its roots in Kent County. The founder of the denomination, Richard Allen (1760-1831), was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania as a house slave of prominent attorney and Quaker,

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Benjamin Chew. Allen and his family were sold as field hands to a planter named Stockley who lived near Dover, Delaware when he was seven years old. His personal conversion to Methodism occurred at about age seventeen, c. 1777, after hearing the preaching of a Methodist circuit rider. He joined the local Methodist society under the leadership of John Gray. Allen attended clandestine classes in the Methodist faith under his leadership. Allen's master encouraged the religious worship among his slaves and was converted himself by the circuit riding preachers. It was the charismatic preacher Freeborn Garrettson of Maryland who convinced Stockley of the evils of slavery. Stockley eventually allowed his slaves to purchase their freedom.

Richard Allen and planter Stockley were not alone in this conversion. The Delmarva Peninsula was a hot-bed of religious, particularly Methodist fervor at this time. Methodism, with its tendency toward emotional preaching and egalitarian philosophy was seen as an alternative to the tradition and ritual of the Anglican Church. Prior to the American Revolution, the Methodist circuit riders converted a good percentage of the population to the teachings of John Wesley and Francis Asbury.

The Methodist doctrine of egalitarianism was intriguing to the enslaved population as well. By 1787, thirty percent of all Methodists on the Delmarva Peninsula were African American. In practice, the egalitarian philosophy did not translate across racial and gender lines, which ultimately proved to be intolerable by Allen and his followers.

Richard Allen purchased his freedom in early 1786 and relocated to Philadelphia. As Allen and other black preachers converted large numbers of blacks to Methodism, the Methodist church began to discriminate against these new converts, despite the messages that were preached from the pulpit. The discrimination included the denial of seating to black congregants during church services. The needs of his community were not being addressed by the white church hierarchy so in 1787, Allen, along with Absalom Jones organized the Free African Society, a non-sectarian group formed to serve and support the black community in Philadelphia. Membership in the Free African Society was not limited by doctrine. Absalom Jones, the fellow founder of the group became an Episcopal Priest and later, the first black Episcopal Bishop.

Despite the quarrels with the white church hierarchy, Richard Allen was firmly committed to the Methodist doctrine. He began a movement to form a separate parish in Philadelphia, whose goals were to minister to both the spiritual and secular needs of the black community.

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The same problems of racial bias in the Methodist and other white run churches in other cities caused similar activities among their black parishioners. Separate black parishes were formed. Soon there was a need to establish a more formal organization. In 1816 representatives of these churches met to formally establish the African Methodist Episcopal Church as a separate denomination. Richard Allen was elected the first Bishop. A book of discipline was adopted which embodied the same articles of religion and rules as the Methodist Episcopal Church. The African Methodist Episcopal Church was the first Christian denomination to be spawned for sociological, rather than doctrinal reasons.

**The Star Hill AME Church and Cemetery**

The mother church of the Star Hill AME Church was the Zion AME Church in nearby Camden. It was founded c. 1845 and served the African Methodists of the Star Hill community as well until a disagreement in the early 1860s caused a rift in the congregation. Soon after the construction of a church began in Star Hill. The new congregation met in first floor of the Odd Fellows Hall until the new church was constructed. The land for the church was purchased from Henry Postles in June 1866 for \$30 by the following trustees of the newly formed church: William R. Hearess, James Till, Solomon H. Townsend, Caito Gray and William Bungay. This site was the highest point of land in Star Hill community. The first meetings were held in the school building until the church was completed. A cemetery was platted to the east of the church and additional land was acquired.

In 1905, the building suffered damage by a small fire which consumed the balcony in the sanctuary. The church records were stored there and they were completely lost. The rest of the building suffered minor damage and was immediately rebuilt. The interior of the sanctuary has been updated over time since construction. The detailing of the windows and wainscoting date from the late nineteenth century, as do the alter railings and dais. The pews were replaced in the 1960s but several of the original benches were reused throughout the church building. The alter furnishings were replaced when the pews were changed but many of the pieces remain in the building.

The church building has received the careful attention of a devoted core of trustees who have maintained the building, despite the declining church membership in the last few years.

The cemetery on the site has been the site of burials since the erection of the church, according to the church elders, although the earliest marked

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grave dates from the 1890s. Headstones, which date from the 1890s to the present, consist of simple headstones, some grouped in family sections. One otherwise unmarked grave has a metal veterans star protruding from it. Mature vegetation along the creek bed, which follows the north property boundary, has, until recently, obscured some graves. Other vegetation was planted to mark specific plots. Burials continue to the present day, with one final cemetery plot awaiting its occupant.

Schools at Star Hill

Education for the children of the Star Hill community has been an important part of the history of the nominated property. The site selected for the church was located on the highest point of land in the community and near an existing building. Constructed c. 1843, this two-story structure served as meeting hall for the Odd Fellows organization who used the second floor exclusively. The Odd Fellows opened the first floor to the community to hold other functions, which may have included a school for African American children, run by the Quakers of the Camden Meeting. During the construction of the church, meetings and services were held there. This generosity continued throughout the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. By the late 1930s, the membership in the Odd Fellows organization had severely declined. The few remaining members gave the building to the church and began to attend meetings at the Odd Fellows Hall in Camden. Around that time, the second floor was removed, possibly at the direction of the Odd Fellows and the church used the building as a social hall in its one-story form. In 1962 the building was reoriented to its present location, and attached to the church by the existing hyphen.

A school building was constructed on the land immediately to the west of the church in early 1870s. Built by a Wilmington philanthropic group, the Society for the Moral Improvement and Education of the Colored People, with funds from the federal agency, the Bureau for Abandoned Lands, Refugees and Freedmen, this two story, frame, gable roofed building had one room on each of two floors. It served as a school for the Star Hill community until 1926 when a new two room school was built down the road from the earlier site. The new brick building was constructed as part of a statewide rebuilding of schools for African American children by Pierre S. du Pont, a Delaware public education reformer and philanthropist. The old school building was converted to a home for the pastor of the church for a short while but was torn down shortly thereafter. The brick, two-room DuPont school in Star Hill has been significantly changed over time through large additions to the property, alteration to the interior and the enclosure of all exterior openings in the

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original building. Although a historically important building to the community, this property no longer retains sufficient architectural integrity to be eligible for listing in the National Register.

**Star Hill Today**

Today, the former Odd Fellows Hall, now church social hall, continues to serve the Star Hill community as well as African American children across Kent County. What began in the mid-1980s as a Black History Month exhibit has grown into an exhibition of artifacts, photographs and books which display historical information for the children which is put up in January and taken down after the end of the school year. Topics presented include: African art, slave life ways and slavery, African American inventors and their inventions, the history of the Star Hill community and church, and prominent African Americans of all professions. The effort to have the Star Hill AME Church listed on the National Register was spearheaded by the newly formed Star Hill Historical Society, a group of local historians and concerned citizens, which is dedicated to the preservation of the history and the remaining historic buildings in this community.

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COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING:

ZONE: UPPER PENINSULA  
PERIOD: 1880-1940+/-: URBANIZATION AND EARLY SUB-  
URBANIZATION  
THEMES: RELIGION  
PROPERTY TYPE(S): PLACE OF WORSHIP, CEMETERY

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9. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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- Minutes of the African School Society. 1832-1906. [Located in the manuscript collection of the Historical Society of Delaware, Wilmington, DE]
- Minutes of Meetings of the Board of Trustees and Pastor of Star Hill AME Church, 1927-1938. [Located in a private collection]
- Minutes of the Society for the Moral Improvement and Education of the Colored People, 1866-1906. [Located in the manuscript collection of the Historical Society of Delaware, Wilmington, DE]
- Oral Interviews with Mrs. Anne Gibbs Bell, Mrs. Emma Gibbs Brown, Mrs. Esther Manlove Craig, Mr. Nelson Driggus, Mrs. Lola Bowers Gibbs, Mr. Jack Gowens, Mr. Samuel Abrams and Mrs. Lucretia Wilson. March 31, 1994 and June 22, 1994.
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10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

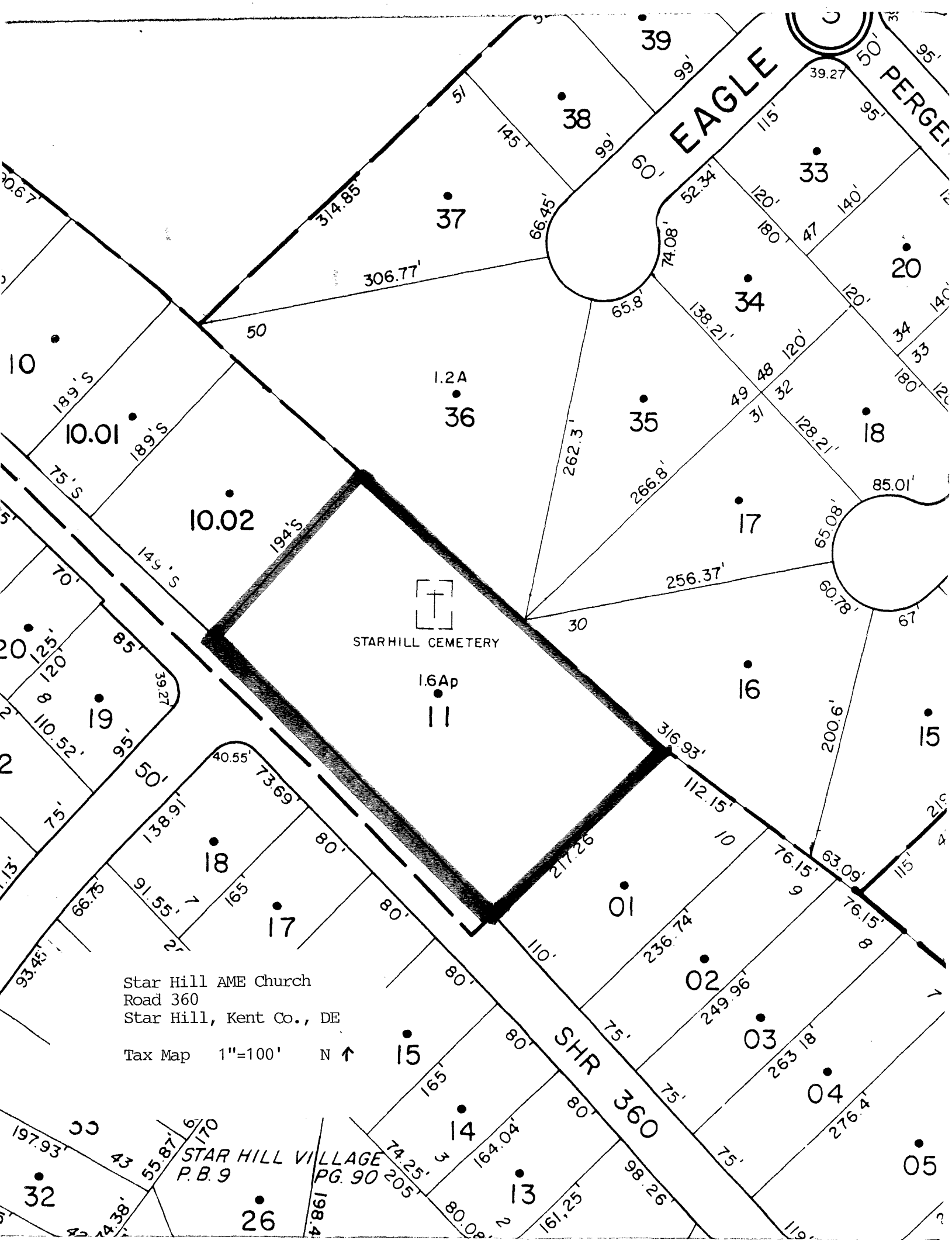
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**Verbal Boundary Description:**

The nominated property is a 1.6 acre parcel bounded on the south by Road 360, and on the north, west and east by adjoining property lines. It is described as parcel NM-94.20-1-11 on Kent County property map dated May 31, 1977.

**Boundary Justification:**

This boundary includes all property historically associated with the Star Hill AME Church and the associated cemetery which also includes the sites of the school building which has been demolished.



STARHILL CEMETERY

Star Hill AME Church  
 Road 360  
 Star Hill, Kent Co., DE

Tax Map 1"=100' N ↑

STAR HILL VILLAGE  
 P.B. 9  
 PG. 90

EAGLE

SHR 360

PERGE