

HA-1302

Bush Forest Chapel Site  
Stepney Road  
Aberdeen, Maryland 21001

ca. 1842

The partial remains of rubblestone walls and a granite marker are all that remain of the second Bush Forest Chapel on Stepney Road. The first was of log construction, erected in 1769 under the supervision of Robert Strawbridge. The first documented Methodist preacher, Strawbridge became an independent itinerant preacher after fleeing from Ireland and settling in Frederick County. Bush Forest Chapel was the second oldest meeting house in Maryland, and the third oldest in America. Strawbridge was also instrumental in erecting several other meeting houses in the vicinity--the Gunpowder Forks chapel in 1771 and the Gunpowder Neck chapel (Edgewood Arsenal) in 1773.

INVENTORY FORM FOR STATE HISTORIC SITES SURVEY

1 NAME

HISTORIC  
Bush Forest Chapel  
AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION West side of Stepney Road, north of I-95.

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

\_\_\_ VICINITY OF

STATE

COUNTY Harford

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SITE	<b>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</b>	<b>ACCESSIBLE</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL
			<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Telephone #:

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

STATE, zip code

\_\_\_ VICINITY OF

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Harford County Courthouse

Liber #:

Folio #:

STREET & NUMBER

40 South Main Street

CITY, TOWN

Bel Air

STATE

Maryland

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

DATE

\_\_\_ FEDERAL \_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_ COUNTY \_\_\_ LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

# 7 DESCRIPTION

2A-1-1

**CONDITION**  
\_\_EXCELLENT      \_\_DETERIORATED  
\_\_GOOD            RUINS  
\_\_FAIR             \_\_UNEXPOSED

**CHECK ONE**  
\_\_UNALTERED  
\_\_ALTERED

**CHECK ONE**  
ORIGINAL SITE  
\_\_MOVED      DATE \_\_\_\_\_

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DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The site of the second Bush Forest Chapel is located on the west side of Stepney Road, north of I-95. The partial remains of rubblestone walls and a granite marker are all that remain to mark the site.

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

According to a history of the Grace United Methodist Church, the successor to Bush Forest Chapel, the ruins here belong to the second chapel on that site. The first was of log construction, erected in 1769 under the supervision of Robert Strawbridge. The first documented Methodist preacher in America, Strawbridge became an independent itinerant preacher after fleeing from Ireland and settling in Frederick County. Bush Forest Chapel was the second oldest meeting house in Maryland, and the third oldest in America. (The first was at Sam's Creek in Frederick County in 1764.) Strawbridge also was instrumental in erecting several other meeting houses in the vicinity--the Gunpowder Forks Chapel in 1771 and the Gunpowder Neck Chapel (Edgewood Arsenal) in 1773.

The Old Bush Forest Chapel is first mentioned by Francis Asbury in his Journal entry of "Lord's Day, December 6, 1772. Went about five miles to preach in our first preaching house. The house had no windows or doors; the weather was very cold; so that my heart pitied the people when I saw them so exposed. Putting a handkerchief over my head, I preached, and after an hour's intermission (the people waiting all the time in the cold) I preached again."

Asbury, in his Journal entry of November 16, 1791, corrects himself by describing Bush Chapel as the second meeting house in the state.

Asbury and Thomas Pilmore again preached at the log chapel in 1773. Asbury visited and preached at the Chapel in September 1776, May 1777 and May 1800. In July 1809, Freeborn Garrettson preached under the trees to a congregation far exceeding the capacity of the Chapel.

Mr. Benjamin Herbert (1723-1818) gave the ground and paid a large portion of the expense of erecting the original log chapel. The first deed vested the half-acre Chapel property in "the Reverends John & Charles Wesley...the yearly conference of the people called Methodists in England," and 9 trustees: Henry, Godfrey & Stephen Watters (brothers of William Watters, the first American Itinerant); Bernard Preston (ancestor of James H. Preston, Mayor of Baltimore and Judge Walter W. Preston of Harford County); John Bull; Samuel Forward; Joshua Armstrong; James Baker (on whose estate at Gunpowder Forks the fourth chapel in Maryland was built in 1772); Joseph Presbury (on whose estate in Gunpowder Neck, the fifth chapel was built in 1773 and the first Quarterly Conference of Strawbridge's itinerants was held in 1772.) From its building in 1769, Bush Forest Chapel was a preaching station on the Baltimore Circuit until 1788, according to the records obtained from Rev. Edwin Schell of the United Methodist Historical Society, Baltimore. No records designate those who held services at Bush until 1773. Prior to 1773, services at Bush probably were held at intervals by Robert Strawbridge and other itinerant preachers enlisted by Strawbridge.

(See Continuation Sheet #1.)

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

**9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

Bibbins, Mrs. A.B., "A Notable Memorial to Bush Forest Chapel," Washington Christian Advocate, October 8, 1925, ibid., March 21, 1929.  
Cronin, Richard F., "History of the Grace United Methodist Church," 1975, Aberdeen, Maryland.

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

**10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY \_\_\_\_\_

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE COUNTY

STATE COUNTY

**11 FORM PREPARED BY**

NAME / TITLE

Natalie Shivers, Historic Sites Surveyor

ORGANIZATION

Historic District Commission of Harford County

DATE

9/79

STREET & NUMBER

45 South Main Street

TELEPHONE

838-6000 X207

CITY OR TOWN

Bel Air

STATE

Maryland

The Maryland Historic Sites Inventory was officially created by an Act of the Maryland Legislature, to be found in the Annotated Code of Maryland, Article 41, Section 181 KA, 1974 Supplement.

The Survey and Inventory are being prepared for information and record purposes only and do not constitute any infringement of individual property rights.

RETURN TO: Maryland Historical Trust  
The Shaw House, 21 State Circle  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401  
(301) 267-1438

Maryland Historical Trust  
Inventory Form for State Historic Sites Survey

## Bush Forest Chapel

## 8. SIGNIFICANCE

Those who held services at Bush from 1773 to 1788, or held regular services there according to the historical records, are as follows:

- 1773 - George Whitworth, Joseph Yerbery
- 1774 - Edward Drumgoole, Richard Webster, Robert Lindsay
- 1775 - Martin Rodda, John Wade, Richard Owings
- 1776 - Francis Asbury, James Foster, John Wade
- 1777 - George Shadford, Joseph Hartley, John Littlejohn, William Gill
- 1778 - Joseph Cromwell, John Tunnell, Thomas McClure, John Beck
- 1779 - William Watters, Thomas Chew, William Adams
- 1780 - Freeborn Garrettson, Daniel Ruff, Joshua Dudley
- 1781 - William Watters, John Haggerty, Jeremiah Watson
- 1782 - Ruben Ellis, Thomas Haskins, Hugh Roberts
- 1783 - John Coleman, Michael Ellis, Joseph Everett
- 1784 - Caleb B. Peddicord, Thomas Chew, William Gill
- 1785 - Francis Poythress, Jonathan Forrest
- 1786 - Woolman Hickson, Adam Cloud
- 1787 - Jesse Lee, John Jarrel (also Jarrall)

In 1788, Bush Forest became a preaching station on the newly formed Harford Circuit. Those preachers serving the Harford Circuit were:

- 1788 - John Cooper, George Haggerty
- 1789 - John Allen, John Rowen
- 1790 - George Moore, Joshua Wells
- 1791 - Joseph Cromwell, William Colbert
- 1792 - Joseph Lurton, Andrew Nichols
- 1793 - McDowell, Stockett
- 1794 - Benton Riffin, Joseph Rowen
- 1795 - James Campbell, Samuel Tarr, Curtis Williams, Milburne (or Robert) Bonham
- 1796 - Samuel Hitt, Thomas Lucas
- 1797 - Lemuel Green, Charles Burgoon
- 1798 - Levin Moore, Jonathan Bateman
- 1799 - John Bloodgood, James Hunter II
- 1800 - John Bloodgood, N. Waters
- 1801 - Joseph Rowen, Rezin Cash
- 1802 - James Hunter II, Edward Matthews, Daniel Fidler
- 1803 - David Stevens, William Ryland
- 1804 - William Ryland, Christopher Frye, J. Campbell
- 1805 - Hezekiah Herriman, Joseph Sampson, William Ridgeway
- 1806 - Solomon Harris, Job Guest
- 1807 - James Paynter, John Thomas
- 1808 - Leonard Cassell (also Castle), Michael Dunn
- 1809 - Daniel Hall, Simon Gillespie
- 1810 - Joshua Wells, Nathaniel B. Mills
- 1811 - Job Guest, Joseph Carson
- 1812 - Tobias Reiley, John Bull
- 1813 - Jacob Snyder, J. Erven
- 1814 - Rezin Hammond, John Lindon (also Landon)

(See Continuation Sheet #2.)

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## Bush Forest Chapel

## 8. SIGNIFICANCE

1815 - Rezin Hammond, Daniel Stansbury  
 1816 - Joseph Toy, Daniel Stansbury  
 1817 - Joseph Toy, John Wesley Bond  
 1818 - Hinkle, John Wesley Bond  
 1819 - James Reiley, John Watson  
 1820 - James Reed, Sr., E. Crain  
 1821 - James Reed, Sr., Nathaniel B. Mills  
 1822 - Alfred Griffith, Henry Slicer  
 1823 - Asa Shinn, Joseph L. Gibbons  
 1824 - Richard Tydings, Basil Barry  
 1825 - Richard Tydings, W.C. Lumdsom  
 1826 - Dennis B. Dorsey, Wm. C. Poole  
 1827 - J.R. Sheppard, Wm. C. Poole  
 1828 - Thomas McGee, John Poisel

1830 - Charles P. Teppet, C.B. Brown  
 1831 - James Sewell, James M. Green  
 1832 - James Sewell, Robert Lipscomb  
 1833 - J.W. Donahay, J.W. Richardson  
 1834 - J.W. Donahay, H.D. Dill  
 1835-36 - Henry Slicer, Amoss Smith  
 1837 - Isaac Collins, Elijah Miller  
 1838 - Isaac Collins, A.A. Reese  
 1839-40 - Wm. Prettyman, Robert Emory  
 1841 - Richard Brown, J.W. Cullum  
 1842 - Richard Brown, David Thomas  
 1843 - Oliver Ege, Thomas Switzer  
 1844 - Oliver Ege, T.T. Wysong

In 1842 the "Log Chapel" was replaced by a stone chapel and dedicated later in that year by Reverend Henry Slicer, a former preacher there. The stone chapel contained a balcony in the rear for Christian Negroes.

In 1844, the church, now called Bush Chapel, became the headquarters of the newly formed East Harford Circuit and consisted of the following: Garrettson Chapel (near Michaelsville, Aberdeen Proving Ground), Aberdeen (probably the old Paradise School), Smith Chapel (Bel Air Road near Churchville), Rock Run (Rock Run Road), Bush Chapel (Stepney Road), Calvary (Churchville-Abingdon Road), Abingdon and Gunpowder Neck Chapel (Edgewood Arsenal).

The ministers serving the East Harford Circuit after its formation were:

1845 - Charles B. Young, Joseph France  
 1846 - Charles B. Young, J.W. Lamberth  
 1847 - W.T.D. Clemm, Charles McElfresh  
 1848 - W.T.D. Clemm, John W. Bull

(See Continuation Sheet #3.)

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Inventory Form for State Historic Sites Survey

Bush Forest Chapel

8. SIGNIFICANCE

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- 1849 - George Hildt, William Chapman
- 1850 - George Hildt, George Coffee
- 1851 - Robert Cadden, A.S. Gibson
- 1852 - James Sanks, A.S. Gibson
- 1853 - James Sanks, J.W. Keys
- 1854 - P.B. Reese, A.R. Riley
- 1855 - P.B. Reese, H.C. McDaniel
- 1856-57 - Jonathan Monroe, Edward Kinsey
- 1858 - R.S. Vinton, J.B. Mann
- 1859 - R.S. Vinton, B.W. Daugherty
- 1860 - Joseph Lee, P.F. Eyer
- 1861 - Allan Brittain, W.J. Simpson
- 1862 - David Sheaff, W.H. Keith
- 1863 - David Sheaff, R.S. Haslip
- 1864 - Francis McCartney, G.L. Gray
- 1865 - Francis McCartney, George Hildt
- 1866 - Wm. A. McKee, T.E. Church
- 1867 - Wm. A. McKee, G.M. West
- 1868 - J.G. Moore, J.C. Taylor
- 1869 - J.G. Moore, T.M. Wilcox
- 1870 - J.G. Moore, J. McLaren
- 1871 - C.B. Reid, George Maydwell
- 1872 - J.D. Hagey, George Maydwell
- 1873 - J.D. Hagey, C.T. Weede
- 1874 - Daniel Haskel, A. Foster
- 1875 - Daniel Haskel, C.E. Young
- 1876 - Daniel Haskel, J.M. Rawlings
- 1877-78 - Wm. R. Givinn, H.R. Savage

In 1878 the stone church was abandoned and a new frame church built alongside the stone church. The stone church was given to the Christian negroes of the area for a meeting place and church and was destroyed by fire that year.

After the frame church was built, Bush Chapel remained on the original East Harford Circuit until 1881. The circuit was served by the following:

- 1879 - Wm. R. Givinn
- 1880 - H. McNamar, C.A. Jones

In 1881 the East Harford Circuit was revised and consisted of the following churches: Bush Chapel, Abingdon, Gunpowder and Calvary. The ministers serving the revised East Harford Circuit were: C.A. Jones, R. Murphy, B.G. Reed, Solomon German, Harry D. Mitchell, E.H. Lamar, J.E. Amoss, Milton H. Courtney, W.L. Orem, W.D. Beale and Francis Bayley.

The frame or third Bush Chapel Church, was abandoned in 1925 since many of its members had moved to Aberdeen and joined either the Aberdeen M.E. Church (sometimes called the Baker Church) or the Grace M.D. Church, South. The church building was

(See Continuation Sheet #4.)

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Inventory Form for State Historic Sites Survey

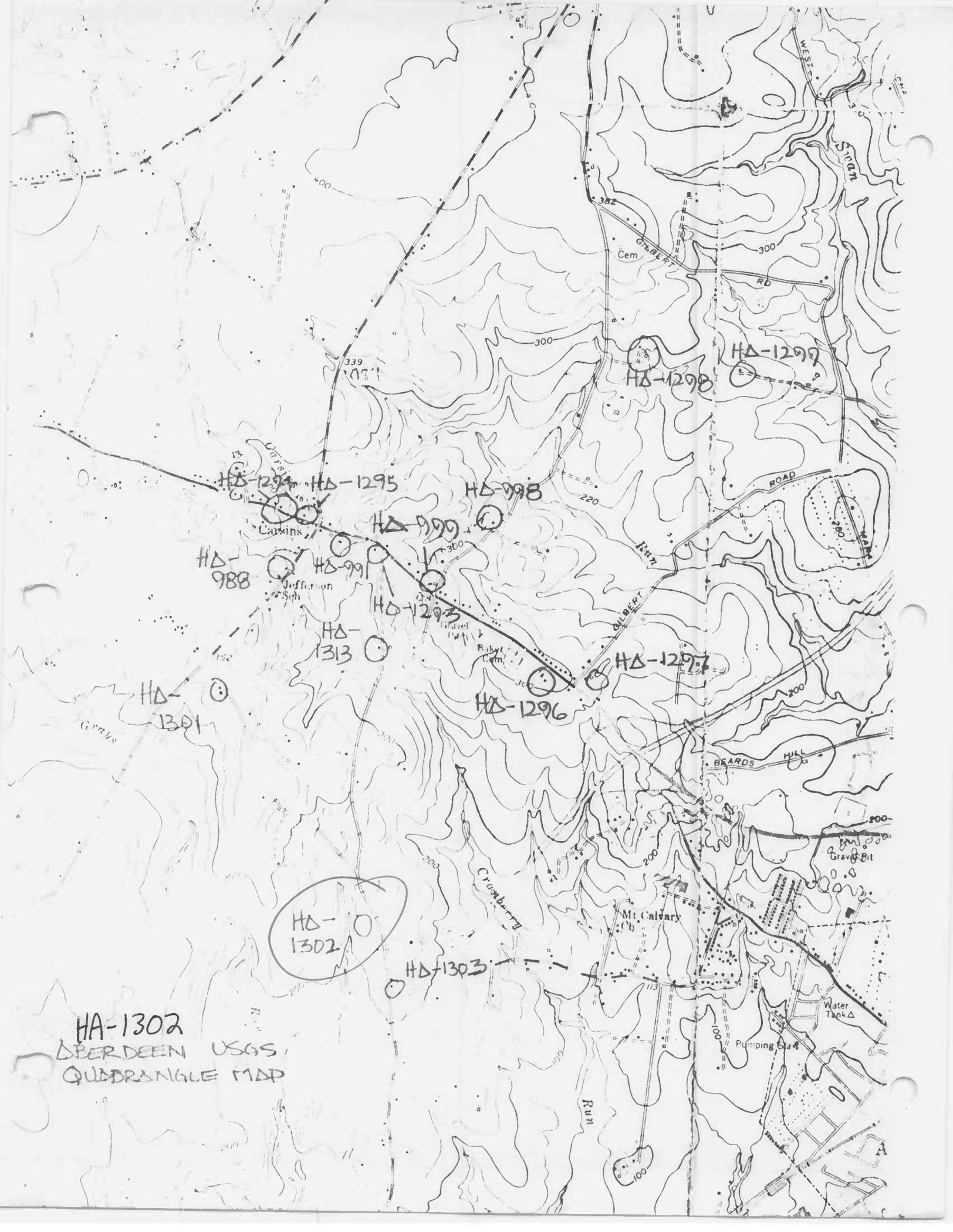
## Bush Forest Chapel

8. SIGNIFICANCE

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purchased for \$300 by Mr. A.H. Wilson who dismantled the building and used much of the lumber to construct an office building for the Wilson-Oliver Insurance Agency on W. Bel Air Avenue near the B & O Railroad. According to one newspaper, the seats were sold "to the Asbury ME Church, colored, for \$100."

All that remains today of Bush Forest Chapel is the ruins of the second church, or stone chapel, and a granite marker which bears the inscription showing the dates of the three Bush Chapel churches built on this site.



HA-1302  
ABERDEEN USGS  
QUADRANGLE MAP



Bush Forest Chapel Site HA-1302  
Aberdeen, Md. 21001

NWS  
8/79