

HA-1340

1886

Ames Methodist Church  
214 Baltimore Pike  
Bel Air  
Private

Ames Methodist Church was the first black congregation in Town (1876). It first met in a wagon shed which they moved across the Pike. The original church is the east meeting room. This simple and reverent carpenter gothic church was built in 1886. Particularly notable is the bell tower with carved decoration and the wall brackets for kerosene lamps. A glass case in the foyer holds exhibits relating to the history of the church and the history of Harford County's black community. Members of Ames Church have been leaders in that community since its founding in 1876.

INVENTORY FORM FOR STATE HISTORIC SITES SURVEY

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC  
Ames Methodist Church  
AND/OR COMMON  
same

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER  
214 Baltimore Pike 1st  
CITY, TOWN  
Bel Air VICINITY OF CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT  
STATE  
Maryland COUNTY  
Harford

**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 type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	<b>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</b>	<b>ACCESSIBLE</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME  
Trustees of the Ames Methodist Church Telephone #:  
STREET & NUMBER  
214 Baltimore Pike  
CITY, TOWN  
Bel Air VICINITY OF STATE, zip code  
Maryland 21014

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

Liber #: 55  
Folio #: 432

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Harford County Courthouse  
STREET & NUMBER  
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**

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

This small asphalt-sided, gable-roofed carpenter gothic church is on the north side of the street at 214 Baltimore Pike, in the Town of Bel Air, Harford County, Maryland. The building is composed of the central church block with entrance tower, a lower addition to the rear, and the Sunday School wing attached to the northeast corner of the rear additions and projecting to the east. The three bay structure appears to rise to two stories in the front elevation; these second story windows light the balcony. The entrance is in the bell tower which forms the central bay of the structure. Double five panel doors in a wooden surround are topped by a pointed-arch two-paned transom. The windows in the three sides of the tower and in the front elevations of the church block are double-hung sash, 5/4, set in pointed-arch wooden surrounds. The fifth pane in the top sash forms the point. Each pane is of a different color, simulating but not copying stained glass. The entrance tower has a diamond-shaped window with small panes set in a wooden surround at the third level just beneath its hipped roof. The tower terminates in an open belfry with decorative brackets in the angle between the cornice and the four posts. A balustrade encircles the lower belfry's portion. No bell hangs in the tower. The side elevations contain four bays with similar but taller windows, 5/6. A side entry occurs in the last bay of the west elevation. The back addition, which contains the choir robing room and an extension of the chancel, has the same roof slope as the main block but does not reach to the same height. The three bays have two windows similar to those on the side elevation. The third (west) bay has a four pane window set in a wooden surround. The east two windows light the chancel. The smaller one lights the robing room. The west elevation of the addition contains two bays, a five panel door in a wooden surround to the north and a small pointed-arch window to the south.

The gable-roofed meeting room attached to the back and east side of the rear addition contains the oldest portion of the building, the 1876 warehouse the congregation purchased from Robert Bounds and hauled across the Pike to the church lot. The front (south) elevation of the ell has a five panel door set in a simple wooden surround flanked by double-hung sash windows, 6/6. The side (east) elevation is divided into three bays and exhibits three windows that match the front ones with an outside brick stove chimney between the northernmost and the center bay. The rear (north) ell elevation shows that the kitchen was added to the meeting room in a shed-roofed addition to the eave of the gable roof. Two 6/6 windows, one centered under the gable and one centered under the shed, occur in this elevation. The entrance to the kitchen is in the west elevation of the ell. The door has three vertical panes in the upper half over horizontal panels. To the south of the door is a 2/2 window.

The interior of the main block consists of the church proper -- chancel separated from the nave by the communion rail, and an entry

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

HA-1340

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 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 type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input 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 checked="" 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 1886

BUILDER/ARCHITECT Frank E. Calder

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

This simple carpenter Gothic Church was the home of the first black congregation in Bel Air. It is significant in Bel Air's architectural history as an example of the belief of Christians both rich and poor that Gothic was "the only proper style" for a church. It represents the simple and reverent attitude of Bel Air's black community toward a space for worship. Taken in its context, this church has the same relation to the heavenly aspirations of the black community in Bel Air as the Cathedral at Chartres had for the citizens of that medieval town.

A second significance equal or greater in importance than the architecture is the central and fundamental place this church and its congregation had for the emerging black citizens. Throughout American history the church has been the one continuing organization blacks have had for leadership training, fellowship and control of their lives. This congregation provided that focal point for Bel Air's black community. It was, and still is, the single most important institution in that community.

The Bel Air black Methodist Episcopal congregation was part of the Gunpowder Circuit of the Washington Conference around 1872. The circuit rider had eight churches in his care. Each Sunday he held meetings at two of them. That meant that each congregation heard preaching once a month or so. In 1876 under the leadership of Rev. Eden Hammon the congregation bought a wagon shed to use as a church. They moved the building across the Baltimore Pike onto land they had rented from the estate of Thomas Hays. The yearly rent was \$20. This building was incorporated into the present church in 1940 as part of the meeting room in the east wing. After using the shed for ten years, the congregation decided to build a more suitable building. Under the leadership of Reverend T. H. Dansbury, the building committee, chaired by Joseph Toney, purchased the lot for \$600 and let a contract to builder, Frank E. Calder. Calder offered to take down the old building for \$500 (which wasn't done) and build a new church for \$900. Some years later a parsonage was built on the lot; it is still next door to the west but is no longer used as a parsonage. The church was called the Ames African Methodist Episcopal Church. The congregation was united with the Methodist Church in 1939. In 1964 it was transferred to the Baltimore Conference. Since 1968 it has been part of the United Methodist Church.

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

NA-1340

**9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

Bel Air Centennial Book  
Interview with Rev. George Gwynn and James Dorsey

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

**10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

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

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

This property occupies the eastern part of parcel #1225 in the Town of Bel Air

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

STATE	COUNTY

**11 FORM PREPARED BY**

NAME / TITLE	27 March 1979
Marilynn Larew, Architectural Historian	DATE
ORGANIZATION	838-8700
Town of Bel Air	TELEPHONE
STREET & NUMBER	STATE
39 Hickory Avenue	Maryland
CITY OR TOWN	
Bel Air	

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

foyer behind the screen supporting the balcony -- and the choir robing room in the northwest corner of the rear addition (next to, but separated from, the chancel). On the other side of the chancel (to the northeast) is the passage to the meeting room. Behind the passage is the kitchen.

The nave walls are white plaster above brown feathered wainscotting. Four brackets for kerosene lamps remain on the walls. The church was wired for electricity in the 1930's. The two aisles and the chancel are carpeted in wine-colored broadloom. The curved pews and the organ were donations from the white Methodist Episcopal Church in Bel Air, used items that congregation was replacing. A tapestry of the Last Supper hangs over the choir. Three late Victorian chairs are behind the pulpit, an arm chair and two side chairs.

Evidence of a boarded up bull's eye window on the inside of the front (south) elevation suggests that the entrance tower was not original. Other changes have been made over the years. As late as 1940 the original church was still free-standing on the lot to the north of the 1886 building. In that year it was moved to its present position and extended to form the present meeting room. The choir robing room and the kitchen were added at that time. The chancel was extended back flush with the robing room, and the balcony and corner staircase were added, along with the partition which forms the entrance foyer in the rear of the church. In the west end of the foyer is a glass case displaying historical items about the church and about the black history of Bel Air.

The slightly Gothic touches to this small church make it similar to many small country churches built in the 19th century throughout the nation. Both the exterior and the interior of the building exemplify a simple and reverent attitude toward the design of a place of worship, a church designed in what was for the 19th century "the only proper style" -- Gothic.

A List of Ministers of the Ames Church

1876	Eden Hammon	1946	Rufus Abernathy, Sr.
1886	T. H. Dansbury	1949	Clarence L. Davis
1900	John W. Carroll	1953	Uzzah D. Chambers
1907	Columbus E. Brown		Samuel Carter
1911	Charles H. Matthews	1958	Harry J. McDonald
1922	Fairfax F. King	1960	Joseph W. Carroll
	George E. Curry	1964	Isaac Abraham Sherman
1929	Virgil N. S. Hughes	1969	J. David Townsend
1931	Charles Carroll Nelson	1972	George B. Gwynn
	B. T. Perkins		
1937	Nathan Minor		
1941	Alvin Hall Whitefield		
1944	A. Edward Berry		

AMES METHODIST CHURCH

55/432

15 May 1886

William F. Hays and George A. Hays  
toMethodist Episcopal Church \$600  
the lot on the Baltimore Pike  
leased from Samuel Galloway, trustee  
in the will of Thomas Hays  
as well as the next west lot.This lease was unrecorded but seems to have  
been dated c. 1876. The ground rent is said  
to have been \$20 per year.

This land, like much land in and around  
Bel Air, was owned by Thomas Hays. This  
part was devised by Hays (1861, 7/752) to  
his daughter, Sally, and her husband,  
Samuel Galloway. If the couple left no  
issue, the property was to pass to  
Thomas Hays, Jr.

MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST  
 21 STATE CIRCLE  
 SHAW HOUSE  
 ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

HISTORIC SITES SURVEY FIELD SHEET  
 Individual Structure Survey Form

SURVEY NUMBER:	HA-1340
NEGATIVE FILE NUMBER:	
UTM REFERENCES:	Zone/Easting/Northing
U.S.G.S. QUAD. MAP:	
PRESENT FORMAL NAME:	Ames Methodist Church
ORIGINAL FORMAL NAME:	same
PRESENT USE:	Church
ORIGINAL USE:	same
ARCHITECT/ENGINEER:	
BUILDER/CONTRACTOR:	Frank E. Calder
PHYSICAL CONDITION OF STRUCTURE:	Excellent ( ) Good ( ) Fair (X) Poor: ( )
THEME:	architecture
STYLE:	<del>country Gothic</del> Carpenter Gothic
DATE BUILT:	1886

COUNTY:	Harford
TOWN:	Bel Air
LOCATION:	214 Baltimore Pike Bel Air
COMMON NAME:	Ames Methodist Church
FUNCTIONAL TYPE:	Church
OWNER:	same Trustees of the Ames Methodist Church
ADDRESS:	214 Baltimore Pike Bel Air
ACCESSIBILITY TO PUBLIC:	Yes ( ) No ( ) Restricted (X)
LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE:	Local (X) State ( ) National ( )

GENERAL DESCRIPTION:

Structural System

- Foundation: Stone (X) Brick ( ) Concrete ( ) Concrete Block ( )
- Wall Structure
  - Wood Frame: Post and Beam ( ) Balloon ( )
  - Wood Bearing Masonry: Brick ( ) Stone ( ) Concrete ( ) Concrete Block ( )
  - Iron ( ) D. Steel ( ) E. Other:
- Wall Covering: Clapboard ( ) Board and Batten ( ) Wood Shingle ( ) Shiplap ( ) Novelty ( ) Stucco ( ) Sheet Metal ( ) Aluminum ( ) Asphalt Shingle (X) Brick Veneer ( ) Stone Veneer ( ) Bonding Pattern: *over shiplap* Other:
  - Truss: Wood (X) Iron ( ) Steel ( ) Concrete ( )
  - Other:
- Roof Structure
  - Truss: Wood (X) Iron ( ) Steel ( ) Concrete ( )
  - Other:
- Roof Covering: Slate ( ) Wood Shingle ( ) Asphalt Shingle (X) Sheet Metal ( ) Built Up ( ) Rolled ( ) Tile ( ) Other:
- Engineering Structure:
- Other:

Appendages: Porches ( ) Towers (X) Cupolas ( ) Dormers ( ) Chimneys ( ) Sheds ( ) Ells (X) Wings ( ) Other:

Roof Style: Gable (X) Hip ( ) Shed ( ) Flat ( ) Mansard ( ) Gambrel ( ) Jerkinhead ( ) Saw Tooth ( ) With Monitor ( ) With Bellcast ( ) With Parapet ( ) With False Front ( ) Other:

Number of Stories: 1

Number of Bays: 3

Approximate Dimensions: 32' x 67'

Entrance Location: Balto. Pike

THREAT TO STRUCTURE:	No Threat (X) Zoning ( ) Roads ( ) Development ( ) Deterioration ( ) Alteration ( ) Other:
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LOCAL ATTITUDES:	Positive (X) Negative ( ) Mixed ( ) Other:
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ADDITIONAL ARCHITECTURAL OR STRUCTURAL DESCRIPTION:

Interior: white plaster above brown feathered wainscoting, wine colored carpet, chancel & down the 2 aisles. Communion rail w/ turned balusters in front, plain square ones on sides. Curving pews from old Bel Air Church in front, plain square ones on sides. Curving pews from old Bel Air Church in front, plain square ones on sides. Organ from that source, too. Three chairs, center, armchair & 2 side chairs behind pulpit at choir rail. Late victorian, carved apron, turned legs, padded seat & back upholstered to match rugs. Fluted panels on back of  knobs on arms of center chair. Tapestry of last supper on back of wall behind choir, plain wooden cross hanging over chancel. Blue slat ceiling. 4 brackets for Kerosene lamps still on walls. Church wired c. 1930's

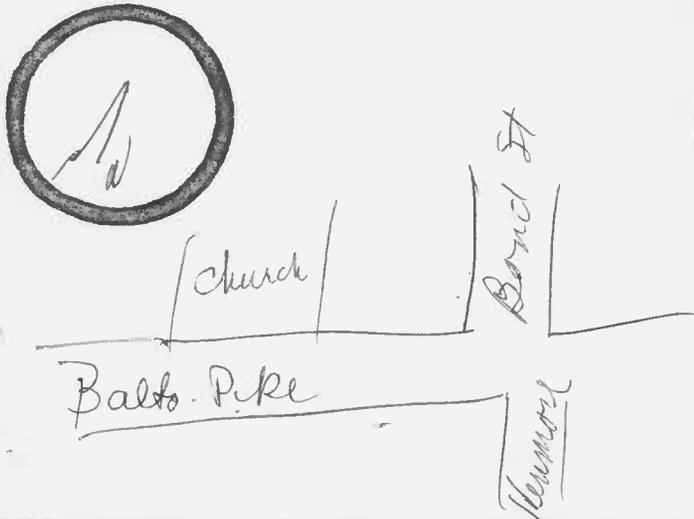
RELATED STRUCTURES: (Describe)

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE:

1st black church in Bel Air  
 1st black Methodist church in Bel Air  
~~church~~ church on site from 1876 when they bought a wagon shed & moved across the street to a rented lot; bought the lot 1886 from the Hayes & constructed main part of present church. 1940 original church which was still standing on lot to N. moved to form an ell on the church. It is the community room (w/ extension). Choir robing room added then & kitchen. Choir extended back & balcony, staircase erected & partition w/ 2 arched entries added to rear of church to form entrance hall. Balcony used for storage & Sunday School class.

REFERENCES:

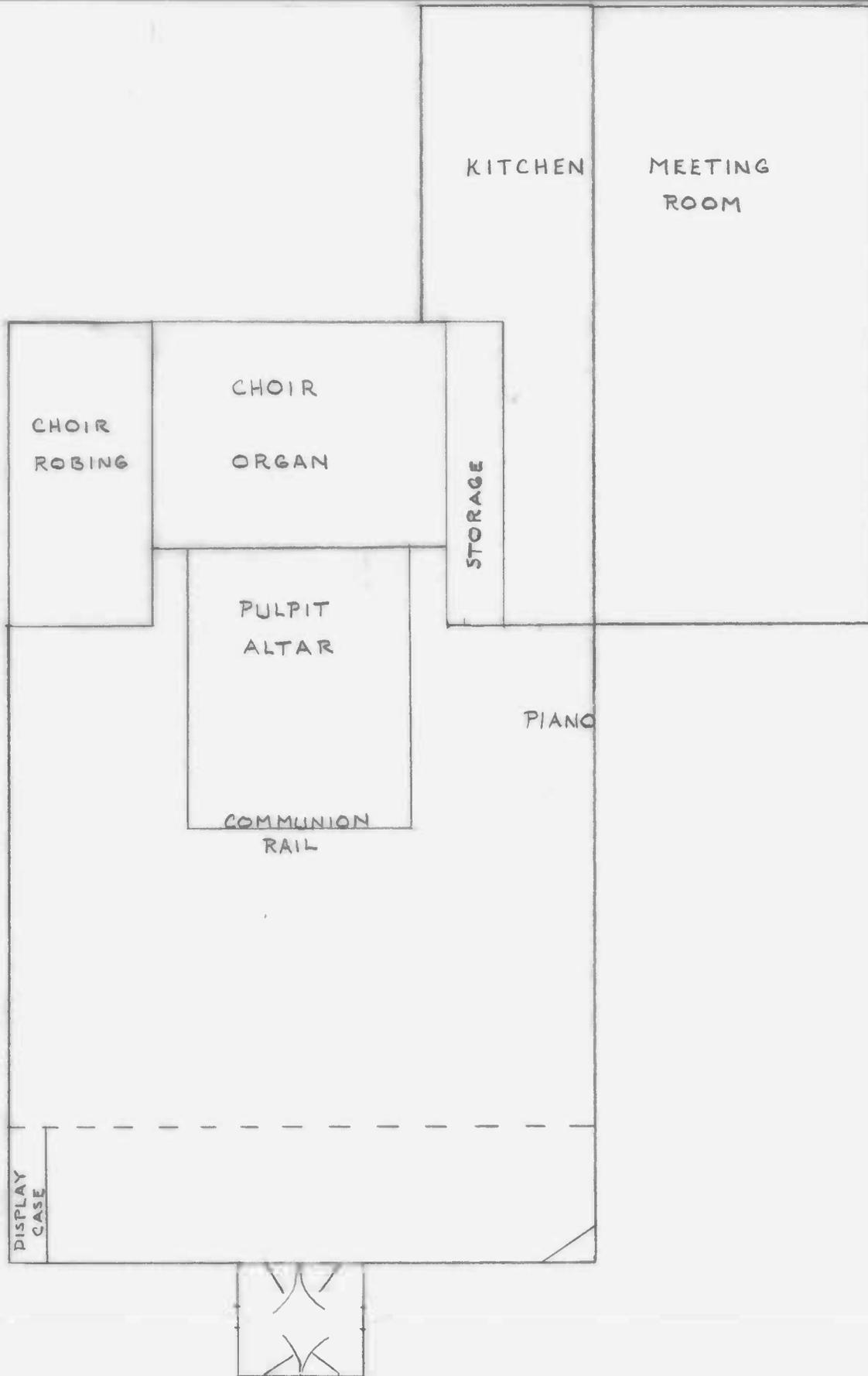
MAP: (Indicate North in Circle)



SURROUNDING ENVIRONMENT:

- Open Lane( ) Woodland( ) Scattered Buildings( )
- Moderately Built Up( ) Densely Built Up( )
- Residential( ) Commercial(  )
- Agricultural( ) Industrial( )
- Roadside Strip Development( )
- Other:

M. Larew  
 RECORDED BY:  
 Town of Bel Air  
 ORGANIZATION:  
 July 1978  
 DATE RECORDED:



D. W.N. BY: MARILYN LAREW

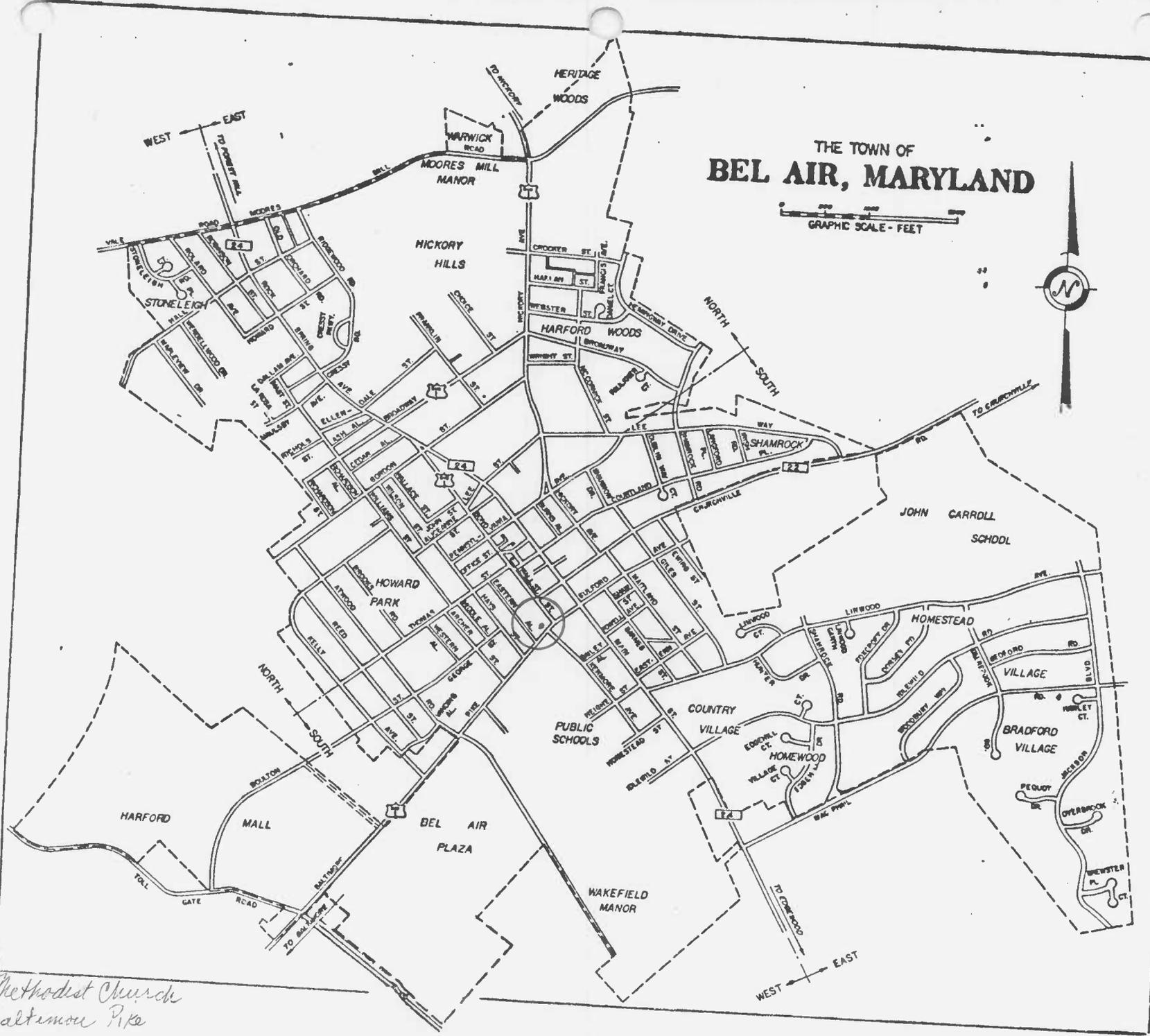
AMES METHODIST CHURCH  
1886

SCALE: 1" = 8'

TRACED BY: G. CUNO

HA-1340

# THE TOWN OF BEL AIR, MARYLAND



HA-1340

Ames Methodist Church  
214 Baltimore Pike  
Bel Air

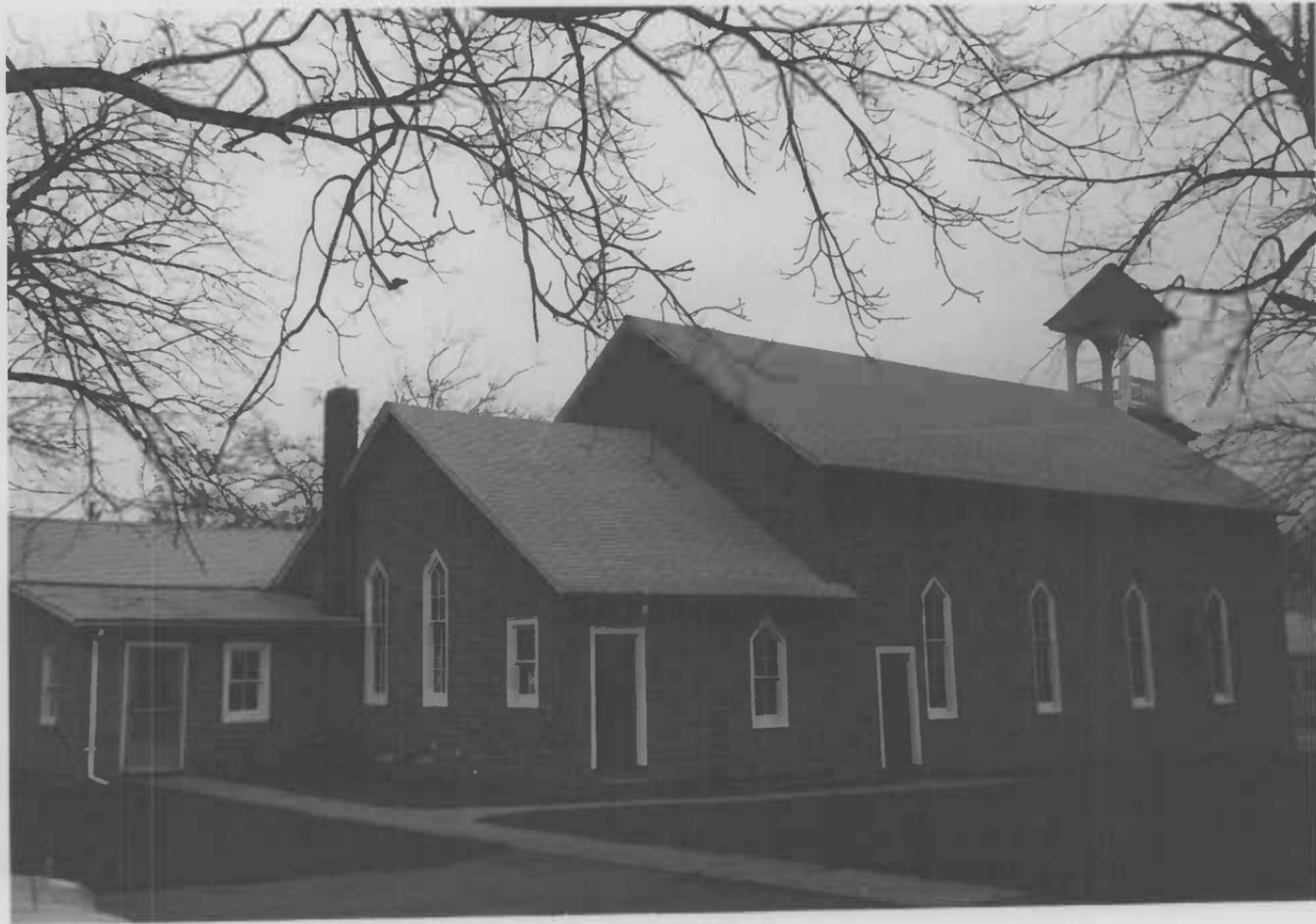


HA - 1340

Ames Methodist Church, 214 Balto Pike, Bel Air

See also

M. Lane, 1979







HA - 1340



Front of Ames Methodist Church

HA - 1340



Back of Amis Methodist Church

HA - 1340



HA-1340



Ames Methodist Church

HA-1340



HA-1340



HA - 1340