

Capsule Summary  
SM-275  
St. Peter's Chapel  
Leonardtown  
Private

1870-1871

St. Peter's Chapel is a significant Episcopal church situated on the west side of Washington Street in Leonardtown, Maryland. While an excellent example of a vernacular Gothic-style church, the chapel also has significant associations with two local builders and an architect. In the late 1860's, St. Andrew's Parish recognized Leonardtown's population had grown enough to support the construction of a new Episcopal chapel. St. Andrew's Church, six miles from Leonardtown, no longer proved convenient for Leonardtown's residents and in the fall of 1870, the Parish hired an architect and two local builders to construct a new chapel. According to the March 16, 1871 issue of the St. Mary's Beacon, the parish hired C.W. Gilpin of Wilmington, Delaware to design the new building and local carpenters and contractors Thomas Cadeen Greenwell and George Horne to erect the frame structure and install the interior woodwork. The correspondent noted that "the style of the building is Gothic...and confirmed to seat comfortably about one hundred persons."

The architectural features of the chapel provide insight into the skill and versatility of Greenwell and Horne. Having also constructed the Italianate-style Eldon (SM-338) as well as several other dwellings, buildings, and structures in and around Leonardtown, the pair of contractors proved they could also work under the guise of an architect and his plans - in this case C.W. Gilpin of Wilmington, Delaware. The church epitomized Gothic design with its steep roof, slender windows with pointed arches, its Gothic-style "skeleton" pews, and its detailed interior roof work. While significantly different in design and detail from previous projects,

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(Page 2)

Greenwell and Horne adequately handled the challenges that the chapel posed. The pointed arch moldings and trim around the interior of the windows, for instance, was accomplished by cutting several strips of the molding into small pieces and then gradually piecing them together to achieve the proper angle for the windows.

It are these details, its service as a worshipping center for over 100 years, the affiliation with Greenwell and Horne, as well as the building's symbolic association with the improvement of Leonardtown and St. Mary's County in the post-Civil War era, that make St. Peter's Chapel a significant historic resource. While the roof work has been hidden by a c. 1900 barrel vaulted ceiling covered with pressed-tin and the interior converted into office space in the late-1980's, the chapel is currently undergoing a sensitive rehabilitation by its present owner Philip H. Dorsey,

III.

– SM-275, St. Peter's Chapel  
St. Mary's County  
Maryland Comprehensive State Historic Preservation Data

Historic Context

Geographic Organization: Western Shore  
Chronological/Developmental Period: Agricultural-Industrial Transition, 1815-1870  
Historic Period Theme: Architecture  
Religion

Resource Type

Category: Building  
Historic Environment: Town  
Historic Function and Use: Episcopal Church  
Known Design Source: C. W. Gilpin, architect  
Thomas C. Greenwell & George Horne, contractors

# Maryland Historical Trust State Historic Sites Inventory Form

MARYLAND INVENTORY OF  
HISTORIC PROPERTIES

Survey No. SM-275

Magi No.

DOE  yes  no

## 1. Name (indicate preferred name)

historic St. Peter's Chapel

and/or common

## 2. Location

street & number W side of Washington Street, 0.1 mile from intersection of Washington Street & Route 5  
not for publication

city, town Leonardtown vicinity of congressional district 3

state Maryland county St. Mary's TM 127, P 289

## 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 checked="" 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 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> not applicable	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

## 4. Owner of Property (give names and mailing addresses of all owners)

name Phillip H. Dorsey, III

street & number PO Box 530 telephone no.: 301-475-5000

city, town Leonardtown state and zip code Md 20650

## 5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. St. Mary's County Courthouse liber MRB 333

street & number folio 488

city, town Leonardtown state Md

## 6. Representation in Existing Historical Surveys

title St. Peter's Chapel

date Sept, 1980  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records Maryland Historical Trust

city, town Crownsville state Maryland

# 7. Description

Survey No. SM-275

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>
<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 of move _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

Prepare both a summary paragraph and a general description of the resource and its various elements as it exists today.

Contributing Resource Count: 1

St. Peter's Chapel is an Episcopal church located on the west side of Washington Street approximately 0.1 mile south from the intersection of Washington Street and Route 5 in Leonardtown, Maryland. The chapel is situated on a relatively flat parcel and oriented on a east/west axis. The chapel is bordered on the north by Bell's Used Autos, Washington Street on the east, a two-story dwelling on the south, and a parish hall (now an office) to the west. The building presently serves as an office space.

St. Peter's Chapel, constructed in 1870-1871, is a frame, one-story, gable-front, Gothic-style chapel with a steep gable roof and a one-story rear wing. The chapel is situated on a brick foundation and is four bays deep. The walls are sheathed with painted cedar shingles and the roof is covered with pressed-metal, decorative shingles.

The east or primary elevation is distinguished by a projecting one bay, gable roof vestibule that features a pair of six panel doors surmounted by panelling that conforms to a pointed arch. This vestibule is flanked on either side by slender, stained glass, pointed arch, sash windows with diamond-shaped panes that light the main body of the chapel. At the peak of the roof is a plain white cross.

The south elevation features four bays. All of these bays are slender, stained glass windows identical to those found on the east elevation. A lower one-story wing extends from the rear of the church's main body. This wing is pierced by a single six-panel door sheltered by a gable-roof overhang. At the southwestern corner of the wing is a cornerstone that reads "St. Peter's Chapel 1870."

The west elevation consists of the gable end of the rear wing and main section of the church. This side of the rear wing is sheathed with board-and-batten siding with the battens fastened to the boards with machine-cut nails. The wing also displays a tri-partite body that consists of a central steeply pitched gable roof central part flanked on either side by shed roof section. The central section is distinguished by a set of three pointed arch windows that have been boarded over. Each of the shed roof sections originally featured smaller, slender pointed arch windows. On the northwest side, however, the window has been covered over and a large brick chimney flue constructed. A gable roof shed was also added at a later date. The gable end of the chapel's main block is sheathed with clapboard.

The north elevation is very similar to the south elevation. The main block of the church features four pointed-arch windows. The rear wing is pierced by a pointed-arch window that has been boarded over.

The interior has been converted into office space but several original architectural features remain. The chapel features beaded wainscotting around the perimeter of the nave and chancel. Above the wainscotting, the walls were plastered. The church originally featured a center aisle flanked by side aisles. The original width of the side aisles is marked by a series of four, square, chamfered columns that rise to support the base of the coved ceiling that is sheathed with decorative pressed-metal. The pressed metal was probably added in the 1910s. The altar or chancel was located at the end of the center aisle on a raised platform. This platform was flanked

# 8. Significance

Survey No. SM-275

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 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 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		

C. W. Gilpin, architect

**Specific dates** 1870-1871 **Builder/Architect** Thomas Greenwell & George Horne, contractors

check: Applicable Criteria:  A  B  C  D  
and/or

Applicable Exception:  A  B  C  D  E  F  G

Level of Significance:  national  state  local

Prepare both a summary paragraph of significance and a general statement of history and support.

St. Peters Chapel is a significant Episcopal church situated on the west side of Washington Street in Leonardtown, Maryland. While an excellent example of a vernacular Gothic-style church, the chapel also has significant associations with two local builders and an architect.

In the late 1860s, St. Andrews Parish recognized Leonardtown's population had grown enough to support the construction of a new Episcopal chapel. St. Andrews Church, six miles from Leonardtown, no longer proved convenient for Leonardtown's residents and in the fall of 1870, the Parish hired an architect and two local builders to construct a new Gothic-style chapel.

According to the March 16, 1871 issue of the St. Mary's Beacon, the parish hired C. W. Gilpin of Wilmington, Delaware to design the new building and the local carpenters and contractors Thomas Cadeen Greenwell and George Horne. The correspondent noted that "the style of the building is Gothic...and confirmed to seat comfortably about one hundred persons." The correspondent did not stop there, however, for he/she went on to describe the interior of the church as well.

The interior is a roof of open work, recess chancel, and on the right and left of the chancel, the vestry and choir room respectively, the latter separated from the chancel by a fixed screen, Gothic and paneled. The chancel will be furnished with the usual paraphernalia-- altar, credence table, chancel rail, reading desk, and pulpit made of walnut and oiled. The nave of the church will be supplied with modern skeleton pews, the whole building to be of the best workmanship and finished with thorough painting. An organ, font and other necessary appurtenances are yet to be secured. We have heard of the contributing of a bell. The name selected for the consecration is St. Peters.

This highly descriptive account of the church's interior and exterior appearance was a typical type of article found in the Beacon in the post-Civil War era. The newspaper readily praised the improvements in Leonardtown and the county as symbols of growing optimism and pride. This was captured by the Leonardtown correspondent when he wrote that

The above [St. Peter's Chapel] is suggestive of improvements in our midst, and the success, not withstanding the known difficulties of this work, encourages the hope, even in these hardest times, that the spirit of improvement may be an irrepressible contagion. A new era would dawn upon us, welcomed as an honored guest, as is now, the new church, the forerunner.



SM-275, St. Peter's Chapel  
St. Mary's County  
7.1 Description

on either side by a room entered via a door situated on the raised platform.

A St. Mary's Beacon article, dated March 16, 1871, provides some insight as to how the interior originally furnished and organized.

The interior is a roof of open work, recess chancel, and on the right and left of the chancel, the vestry and choir room respectively, the latter separated from the chancel by a fixed screen, Gothic and paneled. The chancel will be furnished with the usual paraphernalia-- altar, credence table, chancel rail, reading desk, and pulpit made of walnut and oiled. The nave of the church will be supplied with modern skeleton pews...

Judging from this description, the interior of the church would have had exposed decorative roofing details such as that found at other churches found in the county such as St. John's Church in Hollywood (SM-97). These features may still survive intact--hidden by the decorative pressed metal. Several of the pews survive, but none of the other religious furniture remains *in situ*.

SM-275, St. Peter's Chapel  
St. Mary's County  
8.2 Significance

The descriptions of the buildings, such as St. Peter's Chapel, however, also served as *de facto* advertisements for the versatile and skilled contractors that built them. With a clientele that extended beyond the county's political boundaries, the newspaper deliberately described the buildings in detail and readily praised the skill of its builders. This made non-county readers cognizant of the area's skilled craftsman and their ability to erect modern buildings not unlike those closer to urban areas.

The architectural features of the chapel, provide insight into the skill and versatility of Greenwell and Horne. Having also constructed the Italianate-style Eldon (SM-338) as well as several other dwellings, buildings, and structures in and around Leonardtown, the pair of contractors proved they could also work with an architect--in this case C. W. Gilpin of Wilmington, Delaware. The church epitomized Gothic design with its steep roof, slender windows with pointed arches, its Gothic-style "skeleton" pews, and its detailed interior roof work. While significantly different in design and detail from previous projects, Greenwell and Horne adequately handled the challenges that the chapel posed. The pointed arch moldings and trim around the interior of the windows, for instance, was accomplished by cutting several strips of the molding into small pieces and then gradually piecing them together to achieve the proper angle for the windows.

It are these details, its service as a worshipping space for over 100 years, the affiliation with Greenwell and Horne, as well as the building's association with the improvement of Leonardtown and St. Mary's County in the post-Civil War era, that make St. Peter's Chapel a significant historic resource. While the roof work has been hidden by a c. 1900 barrel vaulted ceiling covered with pressed-tin and the interior converted into office space in 1987, the chapel is currently undergoing a sensitive rehabilitation by its present owner Phillip H. Dorsey III.

SM-275  
ST. PETER'S EPISCOPAL CHAPEL  
Leonardtown

1870

St. Peter's Chapel was built in 1870 to serve St. Andrew's Parish by providing an easier-to-reach church right in Leonardtown. The wooden church was built in a very simple country Victoriana Gothic style. St. Peter's is small but adequate for the needs of the parish. The interior has been modernized at various times.

INVENTORY FORM FOR STATE HISTORIC SITES SURVEY

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

ST. PETER'S EPISCOPAL CHAPEL

AND/OR COMMON

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER

Washington Street (MD 245)

CITY, TOWN

Leonardtown

\_\_\_ VICINITY OF

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

STATE

Maryland

COUNTY

St. Mary's

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

**CATEGORY**

- DISTRICT
- BUILDING(S)
- STRUCTURE
- SITE
- OBJECT

**OWNERSHIP**

- PUBLIC
- PRIVATE
- BOTH
- PUBLIC ACQUISITION
- IN PROCESS
- BEING CONSIDERED

**STATUS**

- OCCUPIED
- UNOCCUPIED
- WORK IN PROGRESS
- ACCESSIBLE
- YES: RESTRICTED
- YES: UNRESTRICTED
- NO

**PRESENT USE**

- AGRICULTURE
- COMMERICAL
- EDUCATIONAL
- ENTERTAINMENT
- GOVERNMENT
- INDUSTRIAL
- MILITARY
- MUSEUM
- PARK
- PRIVATE RESIDENCE
- RELIGIOUS
- SCIENTIFIC
- TRANSPORTATION
- OTHER:

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

Telephone #:

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

\_\_\_ VICINITY OF

STATE, zip code

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Liber #:

Folio #:

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

STATE

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

DATE

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

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

**7 DESCRIPTION**

**CONDITION**

EXCELLENT  
 GOOD  
 FAIR

DETERIORATED  
 RUINS  
 UNEXPOSED

**CHECK ONE**

UNALTERED  
 ALTERED

**CHECK ONE**

ORIGINAL SITE  
 MOVED DATE \_\_\_\_\_

---

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

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 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 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 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 1870

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

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

ORGANIZATION

DATE

STREET & NUMBER

TELEPHONE

CITY OR TOWN

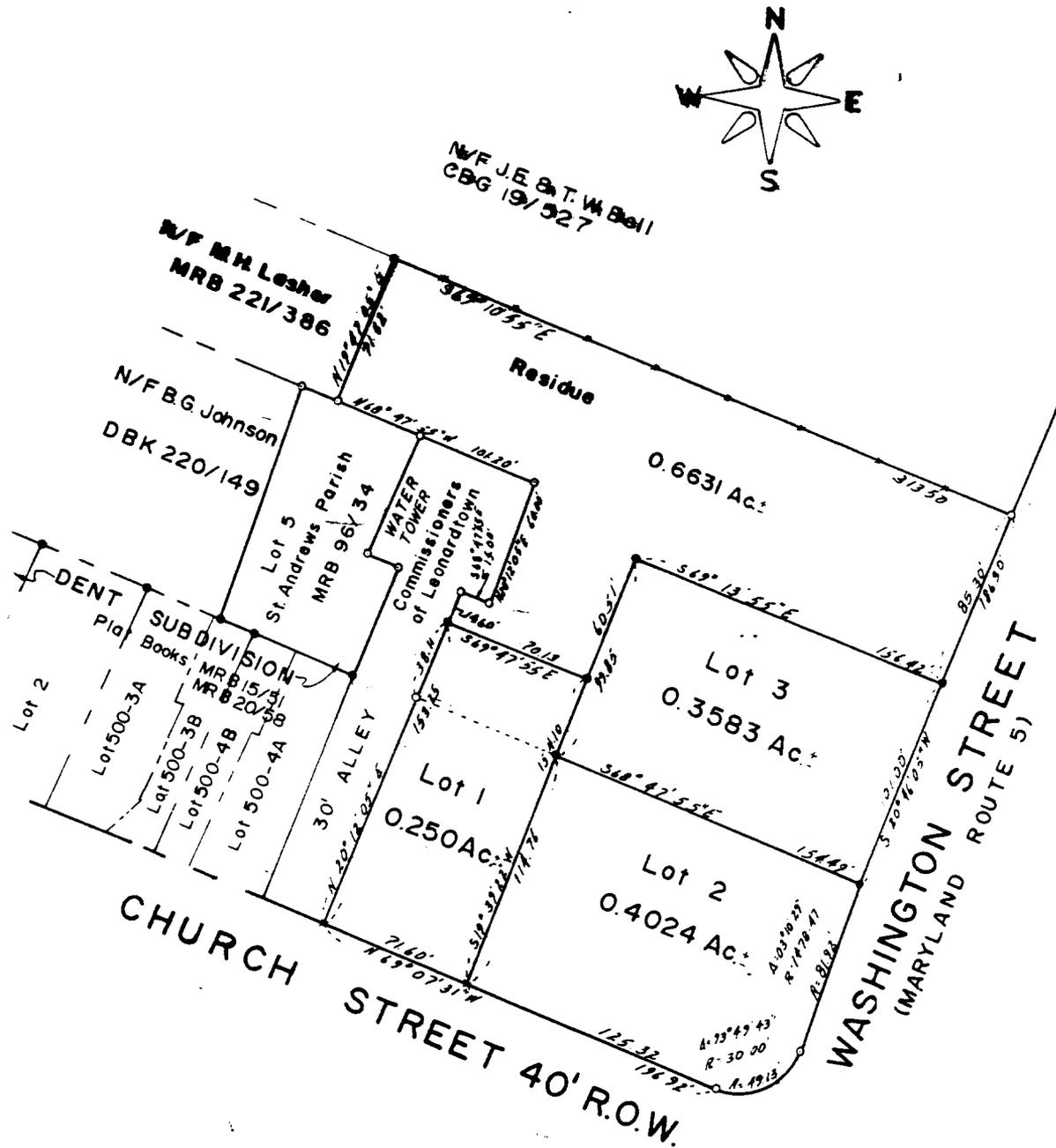
STATE

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.

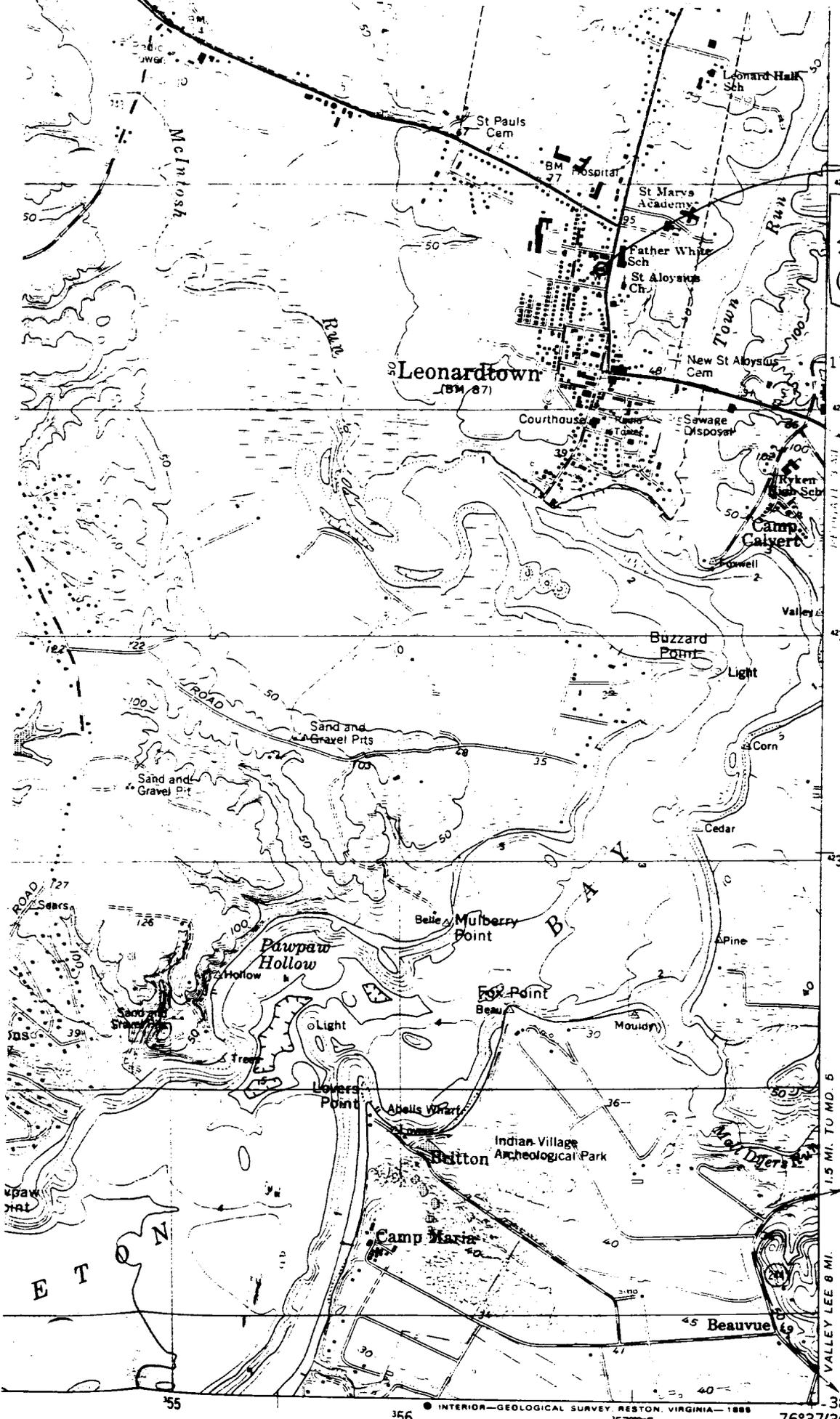
The Survey and Inventory are being prepared for information and record purposes only and do not constitute any infringement of individual property rights.

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

SM-275, St. Peter's Chapel  
 St. Mary's County  
 8.3 Significance



January 24, 1986 survey by Robert E. Trautmann of the St. Peter's Chapel property. The tract is listed as Residue and containing .6631 acres.

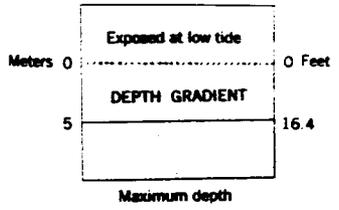


SM-275  
St. Peter's  
Chapel

Feet	Meters
1	3048
2	6096
3	9144
4	1.2192
5	1.5240
6	1.8288
7	2.1336
8	2.4384
9	2.7432
10	3.0480

To convert feet to meters  
multiply by .3048

To convert meters to feet  
multiply by 3.2808



**LEONARDTOWN, MD.**  
SW/4 LEONARDTOWN 15 QUADRANGLE  
38076-C6-TB-024

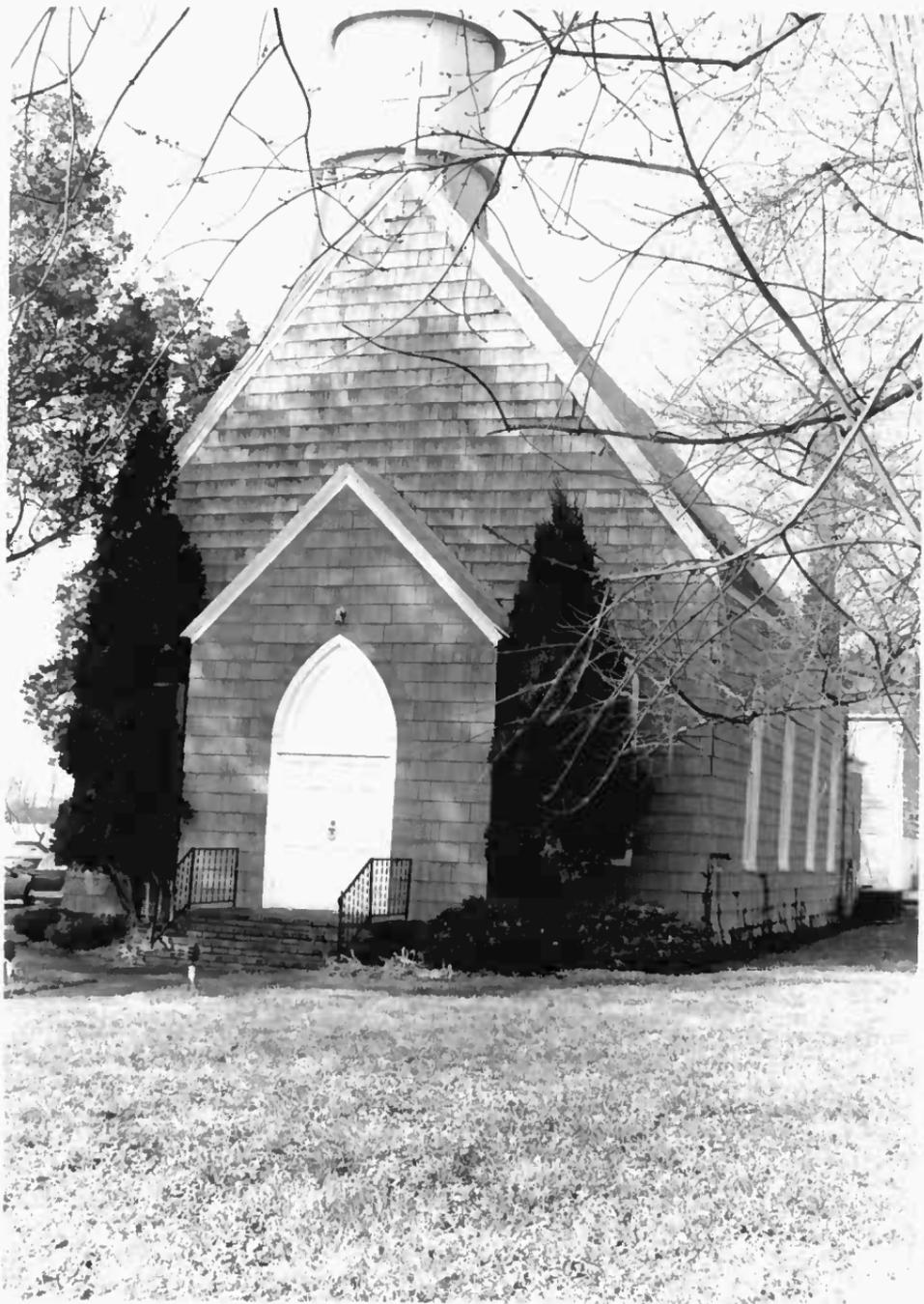
1963  
BATHYMETRY ADDED 1982  
PHOTOREVISED 1984  
DMA 5660 I SW SERIES V833

INTERIOR—GEOLOGICAL SURVEY RESTON, VIRGINIA—1988

ROAD CLASSIFICATION

Heavy-duty Light-duty

(PIN-Y POINT)  
5650 II NE



SM-275

St. Peter's Chapel

→ Anne's County, Md

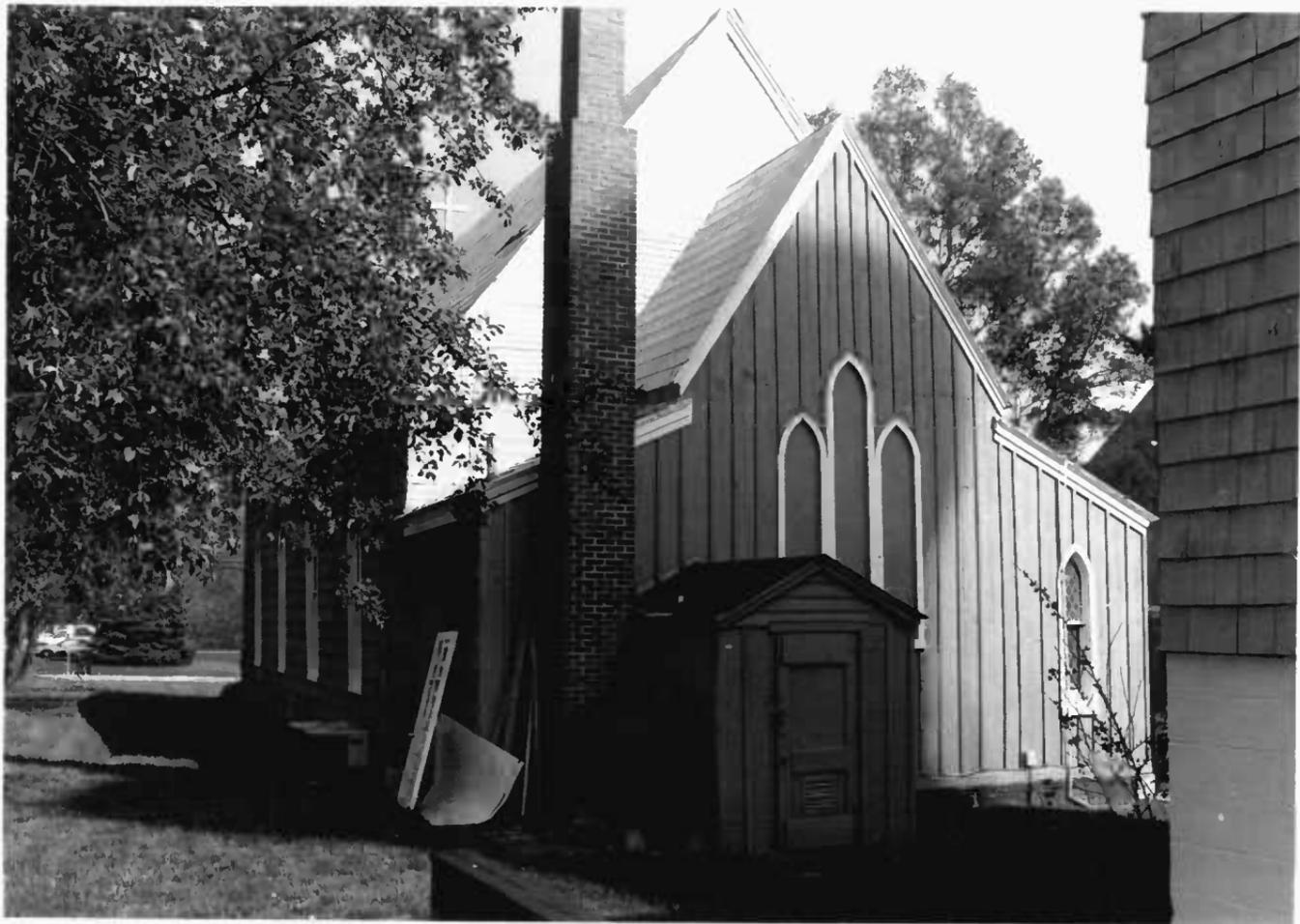
Rick Panzetta

March, 1997

Md SHPO

N+W elevations

1 of 3



SM-225

St. Peter's Chapel

St. Mary's County, Md

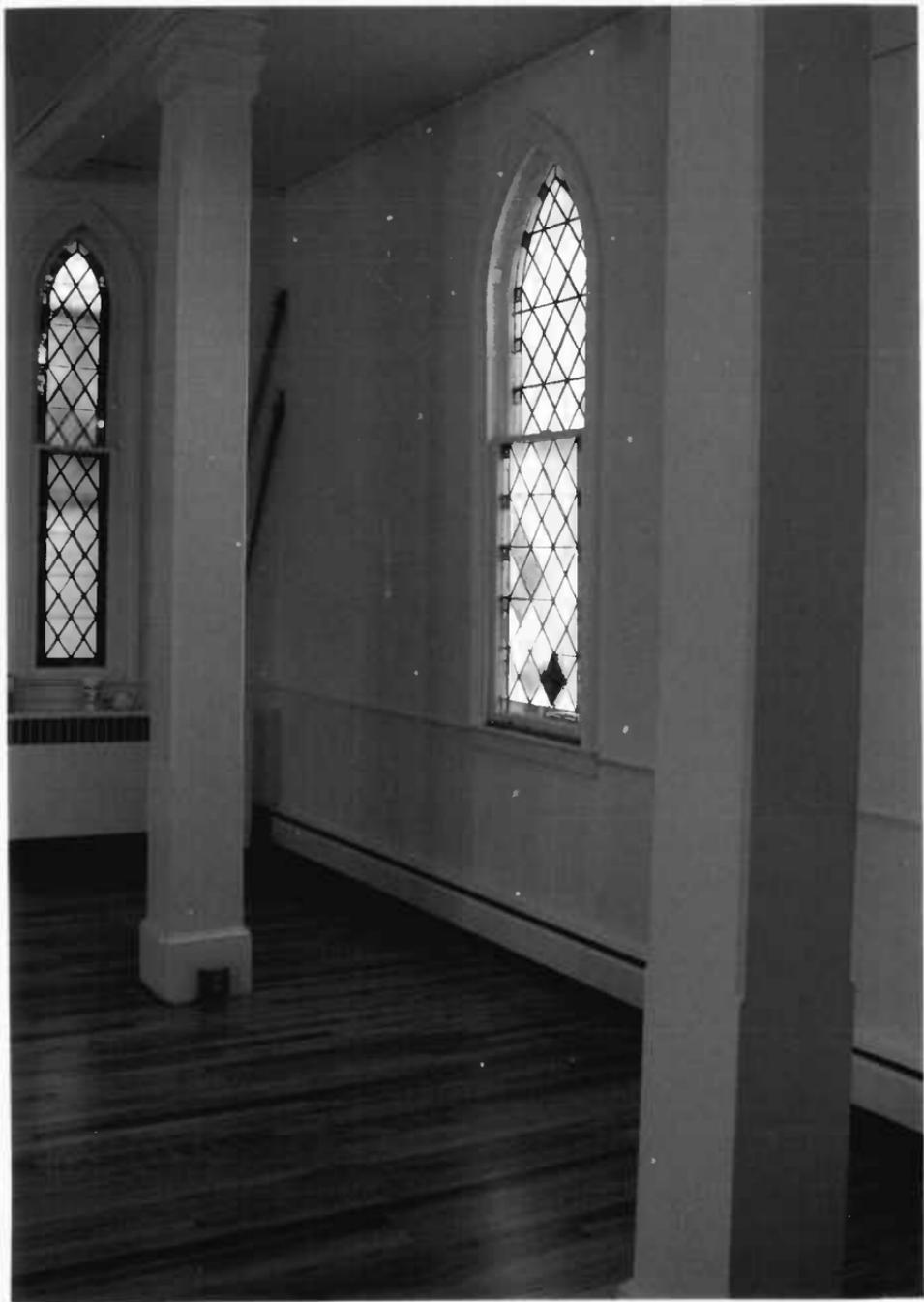
Kirk Ranzetta

March, 1997

1 SHPO

W + N elevations

2 of 3



SM-275

St. Peter's Episcopal Chapel

St. Mary's County

Kirk Rainette

May 1997

hd SRFD

Interior - looking SE

3 of 3