K-583

Westminster Presbyterian Church Site
Georgetown
c. 1760's

When Georgetown was first laid out in 1736, Gideon Pearce, the owner and developer of Colchester, deeded Lot. No. 77 for the purpose of building a Presbyterian Meeting House.[1] In addition to the land, he gave the congregation:

". . . the timber for framing for a house which is to be built upon the said lott."[2]

The records are quiet after 1736, except for the purchase of Lot. No. 100 in Chestertown for the same purpose. If buildings were constructed on either lot, there is no specific mentioning of their construction in the records for the years immediately following. However, in November 1761 a notice was placed in the Maryland Gazette regarding a lottery sponsored by the Presbyterian Church whose purpose it was to raise funds for the construction/completion of two brick meeting houses in Chestertown and Georgetown.

SCHEME of a LOTTERY

The Members of the Presbyterian Congregation in Kent County, Maryland, find themselves under the Necessity of solliciting the Favour and Assistance of the Public in the Way, in order to enable them to compleat and finish their two Meeting-Houses now building, and also to purchase a Parsonage or Glebe: that they may be enabled, with Decency, to worship GOD, and in a becoming Manner to support a Gospel Minister among them, according to their own Persuasion . . .

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The Drawing will begin at George-Town, the Fourth Tuesday in November next . . . or sooner, if sooner full. The Prizes will be published in the Maryland and Pennsylvania Gazettes . . .

The following Persons are appointed Managers, viz. John Hepburn, Esq. Messrs. William Rasin, Dennis Dulany, James Louttit, Charles Gordon, John Maxwell, James Pearce, John Schaw, James Harrison (Susquehanna Ferry), Hugh Wallis, and John McDuff . . .

TICKETS are now selling by the Managers . . . and by . . . Messieurs Thomas Ringgold, and Thomas Smith, in Chestertown . . .[3]

Some 60 years later a letter written by Dr. Edward Scott indicates that the Presbyterian Meeting House at Georgetown had survived the burning of the village by the British in 1812.[4] And almost 50 years later the "Old Presbyterian Church" is indicated on Martinet's Map. Within the decade, however, church records indicate that the buildings in both Chestertown and Georgetown were in such a state of disrepair that there was a desire to replace both with new brick meeting houses.[5]

In 1871, reorganized under the name of Westminster, the congregation built a new church on the same site. The new frame church, while a basic meeting house with a central gable tower, was built in a combination of styles, having elements of Gothic, Georgian and Stick Styles. It was a significant statement of taste, but like its predecessor, it too watched the congregation decline in numbers to such an extent that the building was abandoned in 1934 and demolished in 1941.

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1. Land Records, Lib. JS 18, fol. 253.
2. Ibid.
3. Maryland Gazette, November 12, 1761.
4. Research supplied by Marge Fallaw.
5. Ibid.

K-583 Circa 1736-1790

Site of Westminster Church; 1871

Site of "Old Brick Church"

Georgetown

Private

The cemetery on the west side of Route 213 in Georgetown is significant because it is the location of the only early Presbyterian church in Kent County as well as a later, Victorian Gothic Revival frame church built in 1871 that was demolished in 1948. Strong in Cecil County and in New Castle County, Delaware, during the colonial period as well as later, Presbyterianism never seemed to take hold in Kent County, though an early brick meeting house was built in Georgetown, probably during the eighteenth century. Gideon Pearce, the Anglican "developer" of the laid-out town of Georgetown in the 1730s, donated in 1736 a half-acre lot for the construction of a Presbyterian meeting house, even donating "timber for frameing," but it is not known when a first meeting house was built there and whether of frame or brick construction. The brick meeting house, demolished about 1870, may have been the second. The revived Presbyterian congregation of the 1870s to 1930s was one of only three Kent County Presbyterian congregations that began during that period (also in Worton and Kennedyville). None has survived.

Survey No. K-583

Magi No. 1505835108

DOE __yes __no

Maryland Historical Trust
State Historic Sites Inventory Form

1. Name (indicate preferred name)

historic Site of Westminster Presbyterian Church(preferred)

and/or common Site of Old Brick Presbyterian Meeting House

2. Location

street & number West side Rt. 213,. .4 mile south of Sassafras River bridge not for publication

city, town Georgetown __X vicinity of congressional district First

state Maryland county Kent

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
___ district	___ public	___ occupied	___ agriculture	___ museum
___ building(s)	_X_ private	_X_ unoccupied	___ commercial	___ park
___ structure	___ both	___ work in progress	___ educational	___ private residence
_X_ site	**Public Acquisition**	**Accessible**	___ entertainment	___ religious
___ object	___ in process	_X_ yes: restricted	___ government	___ scientific
	___ being considered	___ yes: unrestricted	___ industrial	___ transportation
	_X_ not applicable	___ no	___ military	_X_ other: Cemetery

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

name Westminster Cemetery Association of the Town of Georgetown, c/o Julian Hurtt

street & number telephone no.: 648-5123

city, town Georgetown state and zip code Maryland 21930

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Court House liber EHP 10

street & number Cross Street folio 342

city, town Chestertown state Maryland

6. Representation in Existing Historical Surveys NONE

title

date ___ federal ___ state ___ county ___ local

depository for survey records

city, town state

7. Description Site - not applicable

Survey No. K-583

Condition		Check one	Check one
___ excellent	___ deteriorated	___ unaltered	___ original site
___ good	___ ruins	___ altered	___ moved date of move _____
___ fair	___ unexposed		

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

Strongly resembling St. Andrew's Protestant Episcopal Chapel (K-575) in nearby Galena (probably because the Georgetown lumberyard of Andrew Woodall very likely was involved with the construction of both of these buildings), Westminster Presbyterian Church was built in 1871 on the old Presbyterian church lot which already has a cemetery. Old photographs show that the building was frame in a Gothic Revival style. There was a tall, steep, gable-roofed main section three bays wide and five deep; a frame Sunday school building was attached to the rear end. The entry gable-end faced the public road. At that end, set mostly within it, was a tall, perhaps square tower with an open belfry with multiple, bracketed corner posts supporting a steeple that appears to be octagonal. It had two roof pitches, the upper steep and the lower kicking the roof outward to cover the belfry. The weatherboard was said to have been German shiplap. The double-hung side windows were tall and narrow with 9-over-9 lights of colored glass. There was a window in each side bay of the entry end. Cornerboards and trim were wide and painted a dark color and ther were dark-painted band-boards between tower levels. Between vestibule and belfry there were two enclosed levels, the lower with a three-part, perhaps Palladian window, and the upper with a round window. The church was located near the north end of the cemetery. The cemetery is well maintained; a rear section was added to it in 1964.

8. Significance

Survey No. K-583

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

Specific dates Circa 1736;1871 **Builder/Architect**

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.

The old Presbyterian site in Georgetown is significant because it is the location of the only early Presbyterian church in Kent County as well as a later, Victorian Gothic Revival frame church built in 1871 that was demolished in 1948. Strong in Cecil County and in New Castle County, Delaware, during the colonial period as well as later, Presbyterianism never seemed to take hold in Kent County, though an early brick meeting house was built in Georgetown, probably during the eighteen century. Gideon Pearce, the Anglican "developer" of the laid-out town of Georgetown in the 1730s, had given in 1736 a half-acre lot for the construction of a Presbyterian meeting house, even donating "timber for frameing," but it is not know when a first meeting house was built there and whether of frame or brick construction. The revived Presbyterian congregation of the 1870s to 1930s was one of only three Kent County Presbyeterian congregations that began during that period (also in Worton and Kennedyville). None had survived.

(Continued)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Survey No. K-583

James H. Lappen, Presbyterians on Delmarva: The History of the New Castle Presbytery. no place, 1972.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property _____

Quadrangle name _____ **Quadrangle scale** _____

UTM **References** do NOT complete UTM references

	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
A				B			
C				D			
E				F			
G				H			

Verbal boundary description and justification

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

state	code	county	code
state	code	county	code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Margaret Q. Fallaw, Surveyor Consultant

organization County Commissioners of Kent County
Historical Society of Kent County **date** October 16, 1985

street & number Court House 778-4600
Church Alley **telephone** 778-3499

city or town Chestertown **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
Shaw House
21 State Circle
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
(301) 269-2438

PS-2746

Presbyterianism came early to Kent County, during the colonial period when the established church was the Church of England. However, it never seemed to thrive, and only one church was built in Kent County by Presbyterians until the late nineteenth century. That the only early Presbyterian church was built in Georgetown may have been at least partly due to its location on the county's northern border, the Sassafras River, and thereby its proximity to Cecil County and New Castle County, Delaware, where Presbyterianism took stronger hold. Scanning the list of names of early purchasers of lots in the laid-out town of Georgetown (in the 1730s) leads one to the tentative conclusion that some of the purchasers were Scots-Irish and thus a likely constituency for a Presbyterian church in Georgetown. However, most of the early history of the Georgetown Presbyterian congregation is lost; there is now only very fragmentary evidence. There is no evidence that it thrived, perhaps because those who were initially Presbyterians drifted toward the Anglican Church, for which taxes had to be paid regardless of one's religious preferences. If one also chose affiliation with another denomination, supporting it required additional expense. In addition, the county gentry seemed to have been Anglican leaders. Very likely, as one's station in life improved, it was thought to be wise to become active in the established church. It seems that within relatively few years many with the Scots Irish names are noted in various old records as Anglicans. In the years just before the Revolutionary War, Philip Vickers Fithian, a staunch Presbyterian graduate of Princeton College, passed through Georgetown on several occasions. Curiously, his journal notes make no mention of the Presbyterian church there, and one wonders whether or not it was a local force by that time.

The "developer" of the town of Georgetown, Gideon Pearce (an Anglican and a member of the vestry of Shrewsbury Parish) gave a half-acre lot in 1736 for the building of a Presbyterian church (Kent Co. Land Records JS 18/253). He stated his reason as follows: "being willing to give all Incouragement to the Christian Religion and promoting the glory of God and the good of all well Disposed persons." Perhaps he thought this a shrewd promotional device to encourage purchase of his new town's lots by Presbyterians. The lot was designated as No. 77, which, however, does not seem to be (according to a much later plat) in the same location as first and second church came to be built in. In addition, he gave "them timber for frameing for a house which is to be built upon the said Lott." It is now not known whether a Presbyterian meeting house was built soon afterwards. His offer of "timber for frameing" indicates that he anticipated that a frame meeting house would be built, though, of course, "timber" would be necessary for the roof construction of a brick meeting house as well.

In fact, it was a brick meeting house that was built, known locally simply as the "Old Brick Church" or "Old Brick Meeting House." It was located on the west side of what is now Route 213, the road that during the colonial period was Kent County's main north-south route and was part of the colonial main post route. It is shown, evidently still standing though probably unused, on Martenet's 1860 map of Kent County. An 1813 letter written by Dr. Edward Scott describing the damage done by the British to Georgetown during the War

(continued)

of 1812 mentions that the meeting house had been spared from the burning that destroyed most of the town. The vestry minutes of Shrewsbury Parish indicate that in certain periods in the early nineteenth century that Episcopal church held some services there, possibly for convenience of parishioners

According to records collected by the late Miss Justine P. Woodall of Georgetown, in 1870 the New Castle Presbytery, within whose jurisdiction the Georgetown was, became concerned abut the condition of the old brick meeting house. It was visited, and the report stated that it had been vacant several years (it may actually have been far more than several), was in great disrepair, unfit for services, and not worth trying to repair. The old graveyard was "exposed and liable to be trespassed upon." However, the presbytery concluded that there was sufficient interest in a local Presbyterian church so that "a tabernacle was temporarily erected for worship." This apparently revitalized group on June 18, 1871, organized themselves as Westminster Church and by March 24, 1872, built a new frame, Victorian Gothic Revival church building. One of the major movers of the new congregation seems to have been the main entrepreneur of Georgetown of the last half of the nineteenth century, Andrew Woodall, and most of his numerous family seemed to have become the backbone of the congregation.

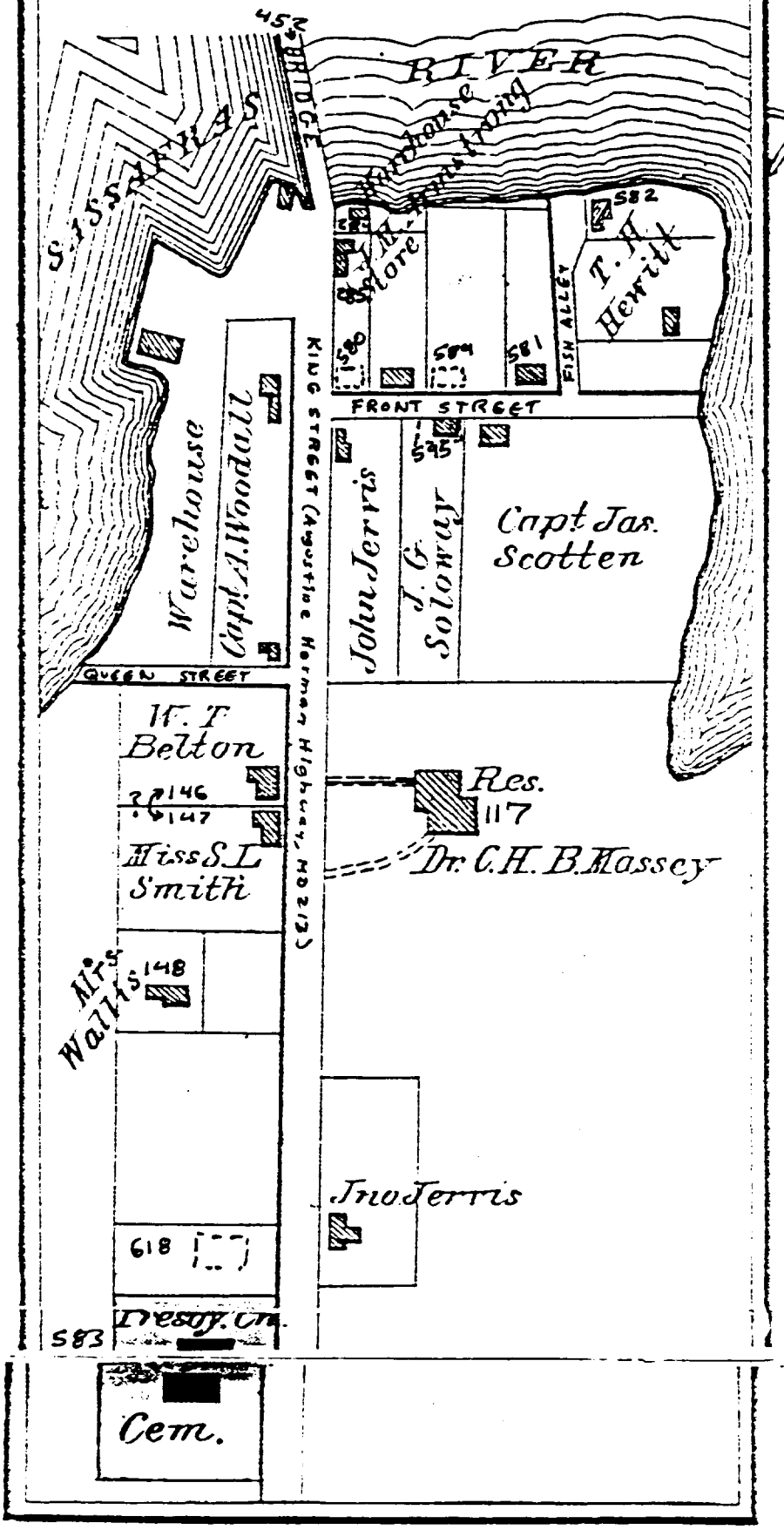
The first minister was called in January, 1873, and by 1877 the congregation bought a lot on the east side of Route 213, south of Georgetown at the bend in the road. The frame parsonage still stands, privately owned but now unoccupied and in disrepair. During the 1870s the Georgetown Presbyterians assisted with the establishment of Grace Church in Kennedyville, which apparently had an earlier antecedent in the Browntown area, and in 1893 a Presbyterian church (First Presbyterian of Worton) was started in Worton. None of the three late-nineteenth century Presbyterian congregations has survived into the 1980s, and the only building remaining of the three Victorian buildings built for the new congregatons is that of Grace Church in Kennedyville, though it has been purchased for use by another denomination. In 1984-85 a new Presbyterian congregation was begun in Chestertown.

The nineteenth-century congregation seems to never have been large. By the time of the fiftieth anniversary in 1921 only 23 members were on the rolls. During the fifty years the church had received "by letter" and "on examination" only 156 members while losing by death and removal 136 members. The declining membership caused the church to be closed permanently in 1934 though it was not until 1941 that the Presbytery recommended that the church be formally dissolved. By 1948 the church had fallen into such a state of disrepair that it was feared that the belfry and steeple would topple. In that year both the parsonage and church building were sold, the latter for salvage. The church burial ground, with numerous early burials (though few of those are marked), was put under the care of a newly-formed Westminster Cemetery Association, which still owns and maintains the property.

K-583

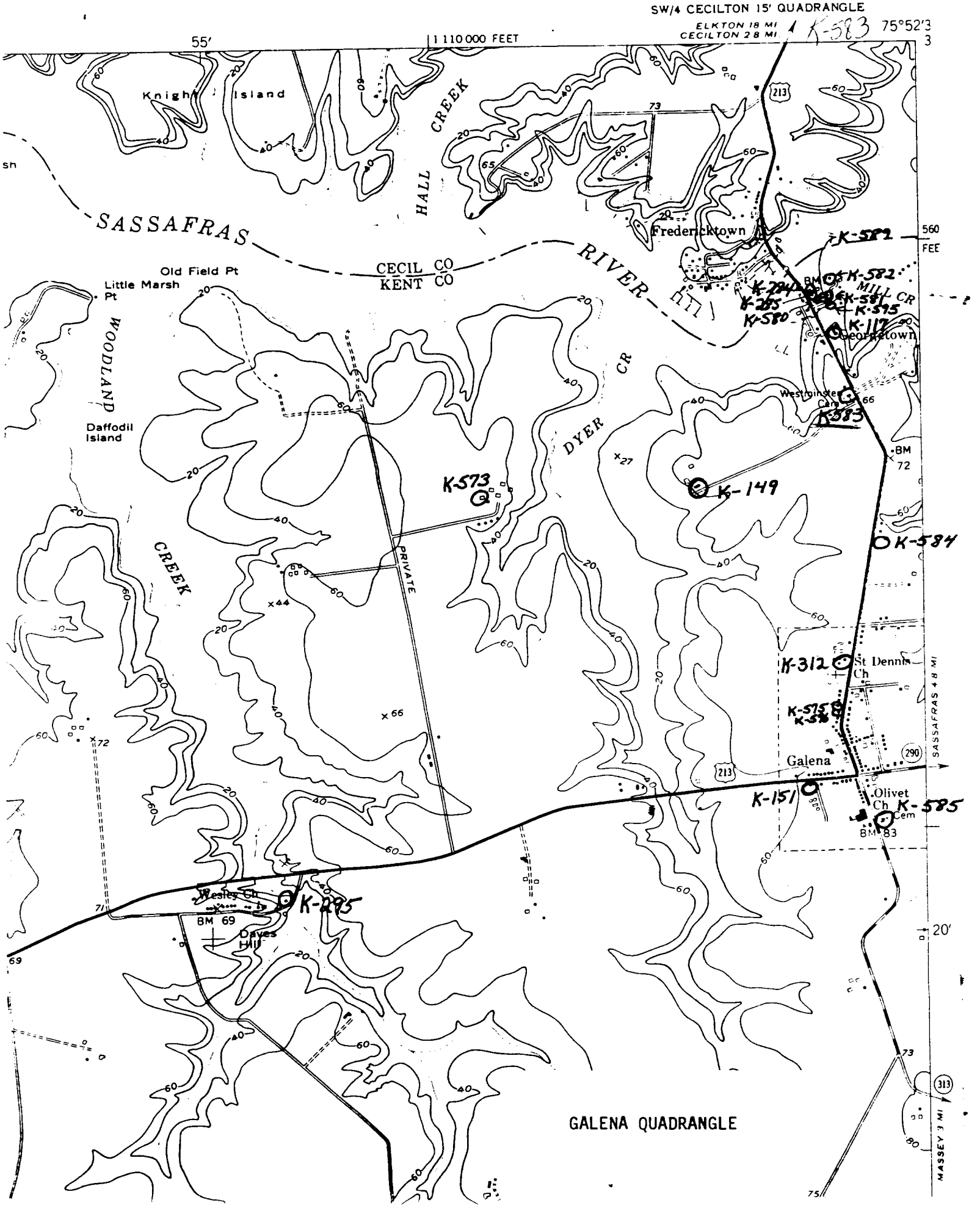
GEORGETOWN
KENT CO.

Dist. No. 7



7.5 MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC)

SW/4 CECILTON 15' QUADRANGLE



K-583-A
Westminster Presbyterian Church (now site)
Rt. 213, Georgetown
Copy of ca. 1920 photo, owner Merrick Huyett
M. Q. Fallaw - 2/10/86
View to north

K-583

MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST
LIBRARY

K-583 Presbyterian church Site c. 1760 K-583-A