

K-586

Circa 1900

Olivet Hill Public School

Near Galena

Private

The one-teacher Olivet Hill School was probably built in the early twentieth or very late nineteenth century to replace an earlier, circa 1884 building that burned. It is a small, two-part, one-storey, gable-roofed frame building that was built adjacent to the community's now-abandoned Methodist church (K-364). Both buildings were a focus of community activity, and the schoolhouse still is, providing space for Sunday School for local children. The tall-walled main section, containing the classroom, is now covered with green-stained wood shingles over the original horizontal, lapped weatherboard. The lower-roofed west-end wing, originally a vestibule-cloakroom with an entry into the central bay, may have been an addition to the main section. On the north side of the main section is a group of three double-hung windows and an entry, on the south side three spaced, high awning windows, and no windows on the east end. The school is a survival from the period in Kent County educational history when a small, one-teacher, segregated school served each of the county's numerous, scattered black communities. Architecturally, the building is an example of the simple, utilitarian, almost spartan kind of school built in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This kind of school was retained for use longer for black children than for white, however. Olivet Hill School seems to have been one of the last one-teacher black schools to operate in Kent County, closing in 1958.

# Maryland Historical Trust State Historic Sites Inventory Form

## 1. Name (indicate preferred name)

historic Olivet Hill Public School

and/or common

## 2. Location

street & number East side, end of southern spur of O.P. 410 (Olivet Hill Rd.), east of Galena  not for publication

city, town Galena  vicinity of congressional district First

state Maryland county Kent

## 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 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

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

name Olivet Hill Methodist Church, c/o Mrs. Jeanne W. Wright

street & number Olivet Hill telephone no.: 648-5742

city, town Galena state and zip code Maryland 21635

## 5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Court House liber WHG 55

street & number Cross Street folio 521

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

Survey No. K-586

<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 type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved	date of move _____
<input checked="" 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.

Olivet Hill Public School, probably built in the early twentieth century or very late nineteenth century to replace a school that burned, is a small, two-part, one story, gable-roofed frame school that was built adjacent to the Methodist church in Olivet Hill for the black children of the community. The tall-walled main section, containing the single classroom, is now covered with olive-green stained wood shingles over horizontal, lapped weatherboard. The lower-roofed wing, originally a vestibule-cloakroom, may have been added later to the west gable-end of the main section, and it also may have been extended. It is now used as a church hall kitchen. Entry into the school is through the gable-end central bay of the vestibule and also through a door in the west bay of the north side, directly into the classroom. On the north side of the main section there is a group of three double-hung windows, on the south side three spaced awning windows high in the wall, and no windows on the east end.

The two-bay wide, four-bay deep main section measures about 16 feet wide by 29 feet deep. The possibly added and /or expanded vestibule measures the same width but only 8 feet deep. It has a single double-hung window on each side of the central, gable-end entry and no windows on the sides.

The main section rests on heavy sills that seem to be on brick piers, though they really could not be seen. The remains of what might have been brick piers are visible on the south side. The school's support structure appears to have suffered from rot and/or termites. There is a pronounced sag in the north side, and there may have been considerable subsidence as well. The wing rests on built-up 2" sills, resting on concrete block, indicating that the wing is later or that deteriorated sills have been replaced.

The roof of the main section is covered with modern, false standing-seam metal sheets, while the wing roof is of corrugated metal. Both sections have a plain, small boxed cornice. The overhang of the main section roof is about 8" all around. On the wing the corrugated roofing overhangs the cornice by about 10-12".

There is one brick chimney, used originally for a stove. It is on the north side, within the wall, between the side entry door and the group of three windows. Rebuilt, it has a four-course corbelled cap (out and in). On the interior, the chimney is parged and painted.

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# 8. Significance

Survey No. K-586

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other (specify) black history

**Specific dates** c. 1900-1915 **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.

Olivet Hill School is a survival from the period in Kent County educational history when a small, one-teacher, segregated school served each of the county's numerous, scattered black communities. Located near the church as was true in most of these communities, the school along with the church was a focus for the community. The building is an example of the simple, utilitarian, almost spartan kind of school built in the county in the late nineteenth and very early twentieth centuries. This kind of school was retained for use longer for black children than for white children, however Olivet Hill School seems to have been one of the last one-teached black schools to operate in the county, closing in 1958.

The first schools for black children in Kent County were organized in and near black churches after the Civil War, in 1865. There were some literate blacks before the Civil War, especially among the county's free blacks, but those who learned to read and write did so outside a school setting. Both the county and the state had declined to fund schools for blacks, and black-owned property was exempt from taxation for schools since no schools for black children were to be provided. Until the school-reforming state Constitution of 1864, public education for whites was also in disarray, but the new state school system resulting from the new constitution did nothing to provide for the education of black children.

Encouraged by the outcome of the Civil War and with a pent-up desire for learning, six or seven schools for blacks were begun in Kent County between September 27 and November 1, 1865. All seem to have been started at the urging of the Baltimore Association for the Moral and Educational Improvement of the Colored People, which raised money to supplement local monies and recruited teachers. However, during October and November two of the Kent County churches holding schools (John Wesley in Millington and Holy

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Coursed wood shingles cover the original weatherboard, which from main section to wing does not align. The west gable end of the main section has full corner-boards, also suggesting that the vestibule may be added.

The wing's gable-end entry has plain wide trim and a door with 2-over-2 panels. The step is of concrete block. There is an old water pump with a surrounding slab just outside this entry. The north-side entry, into the classroom, has a five-panel door with screen door that may have replaced an earlier door. There appears to be a closed transom, whose head aligned with the heads of the nearby grouped windows. At this door is a small concrete stoop and step.

The three spaced awning windows high in the main section south wall originally had six lights; now one of them has only one light. The north side's double-hung windows have 2-over-2 lights. Trim is plain, and there is no sign of there ever having been shutters, suggesting a twentieth-century building date or trim replacement. The wing windows are smaller but also with 2-over-2 lights; trim is plain.

There are now no school-associated outbuildings. Originally there must have been "necessaries" and possibly a coal shed.

On the interior, the floor is carpeted. The originally high ceiling recently has been lowered by a suspended-frame panel and light-fixture system. From the chimney to the wing the walls are covered with wide, horizontal beaded-board to about six-foot height. The remainder of the lower walls are of horizontal beaded-board that is narrower, about 3-1/2". On the windowless east-end wall a slate chalkboard extends almost the entire wall width, on the south wall chalk boards stretch from nearly the east corner to opposite the chimney. The classroom is furnished for the holding of Sunday School classes--with modern furniture, old desks, and grained-oak pews from the church. The bell in the church bell evidently was rung as the school bell.

The school stands to the south of the now-abandoned Olivet Hill Methodist Church, with a lawn between. The church's decorative metal fence encloses the front section of the adjacent lawn, ending quite near the school. Both buildings are oriented west toward an unpaved road that ends in front of the school. To the east and northeast is the church's cemetery. Fifteen or twenty feet to the south is a cultivated field of the adjacent farm. The old flag pole remains in front of the school.

In the distance to the west, over slightly rolling, lower fields, the Galena water tank and several Galena buildings can be seen, including Olivet Methodist Church on the Galena-Massev Road. Looking west, one realizes that Olivet Hill is really considerably higher than the surrounding countryside, though within the community the land is essentially flat. It is a plateau, with a northeast escarpment that is not, however, visible from the school property. To the north, northwest, and northeast houses of the community can be seen.

Trinity at Edesville) were burned by some who feared black education. Despite the threatening talk and violence, the churches, with the aid of the Baltimore Association, seem to have persisted, providing the only schools for blacks until 1870, when the state made its first moves, though small. By 1873 public schools for blacks were reported to have been started in all the counties, supported by general taxation, and by 1881 there were 18 black schools in Kent County. With the goal achieved, the Baltimore Association is said to have ceased its schools program. (For a more detailed discussion of this topic, see the report for K-628.)

There is now no documentary evidence of an especially early school in Olivet Hill, though an independent Methodist church was present there by 1859 and perhaps as early as 1853. (See report for K-364, Olivet Hill Church.) A school may have been held in the church itself before the 1884 school deed. In 1884, however, it was the church that sold part of its land to the county school commissioners for a school, four square perches for \$125. (Kent Co. Land Records, SB 5/178; Jan. 7, 1884) Five church trustees (Robert D. Paca, a misspelling for Peaker, George Rasin, Norris Miller, Charles Young and John Caulk) were denoted the "Trustees of the Colored 'Olivet Chapel' on 'Brown's Hill'" and made the transaction. Peaker signed his name to the deed; the other four "made their mark."

The deed, as the earlier church deed of 1869 also does, states the church name to be Olivet Chapel, though it is apparently not yet applied to the community. In the school deed it is referred to as Brown's Hill (for the free black family who before the Civil War had considerable property there), and in other old deeds it is called Upper Branch (presumably for the branch of Mill Creek that borders the community of Olivet Hill on the northeast. In others it is called Oliver's Hill; whether or not this is a corruption of Olivet or is derived from a person's name is not known. Neither the 1860 Martenet map of Kent County nor the 1877 atlas map of this section even acknowledge the existence of a black community at Olivet Hill, though there were free blacks there well before 1860 as owners of relatively small tracts and who also worked on nearby farms. Although the 1877 maps generally show the location and indicate the existence of the county's black churches, the map is blank for the entire Olivet Hill section although the unattributed buildings along the old route of the Galena-Sassafras road may have belonged to blacks.

Presumably a schoolhouse was built shortly after the 1884 land transaction. It does not seem to be the surviving building, however, which although a minimal building, is of better quality and with fenestration not found in Kent County black schools of the 1880s. The original school was said by a granddaughter of Robert Peaker, Catherine Carter, to have burned. She was not certain when the old building burned and the new one was built. From the grouped windows on one long side and the high windows on the other, however, an early twentieth-century building date may be inferred. This school may date as late as the period of Rosenwald Fund school building although it was not a Rosenwald-assisted school (as were the Sharptown and Coleman schools). The Rosenwald Fund promoted (indeed required) certain design features, especially those involving light and ventilation, and it is

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possible that this school reflects that thinking. (See reports for K-513, Sharptown School, and K-505, Coleman School.)

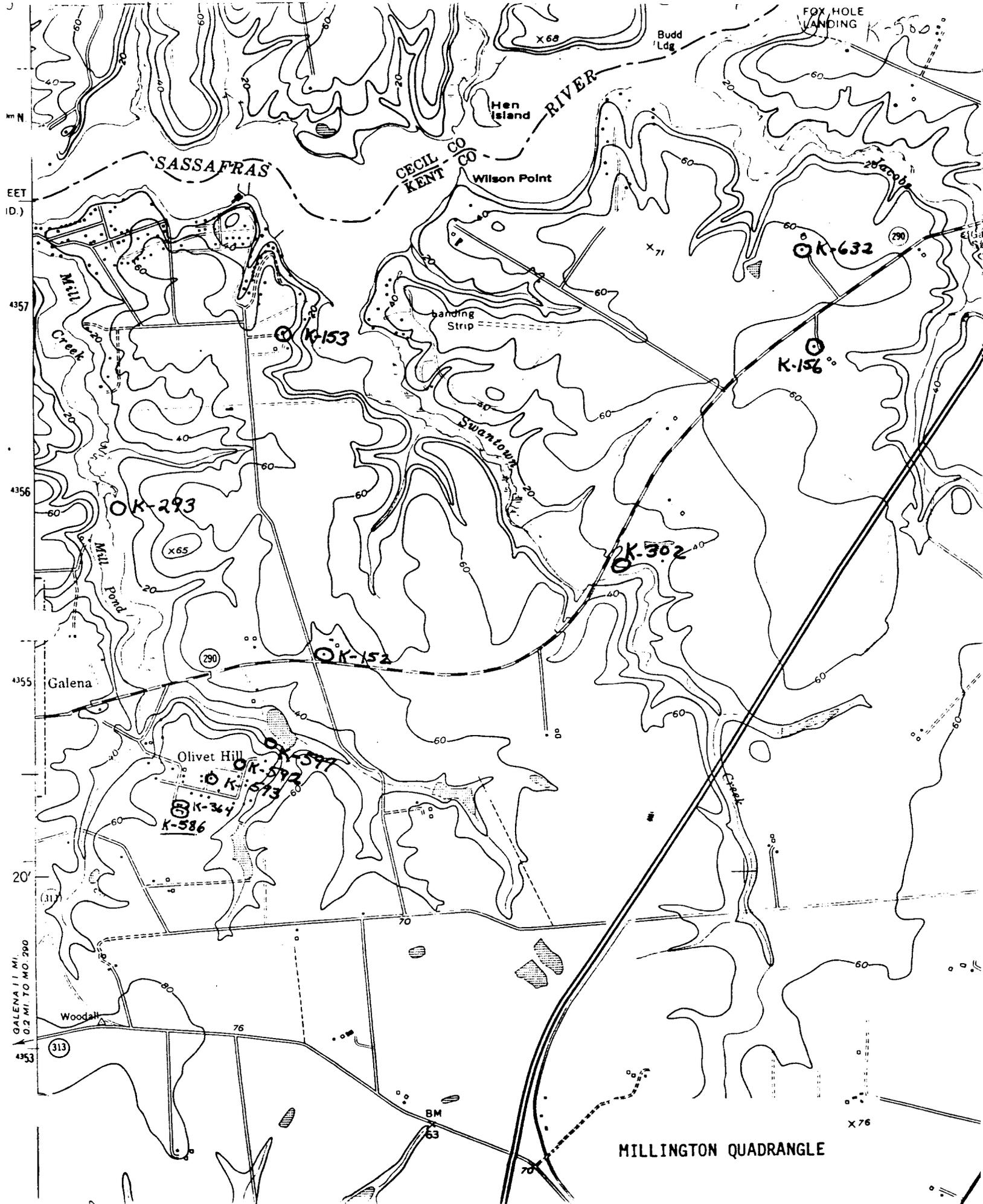
A school report for the school year ending July 31, 1900, (Lynn, p. 42-43) shows that total county black enrollment fluctuated greatly during the school year (which then had four terms). For the fall term (harvest time) only 505 were on the roll, with an average daily attendance of 458. The winter term showed 1,412, though the average daily attendance was only 599. For the other two terms, the enrollment was intermediate. The Olivet Hill School seems to have been School No. 4 of the First District (black schools were numbered separately from white). The teacher for that year is listed as Mary L. Sampson. The school report for 1922-23 (Cliffs typescript) shows 24 elementary schools for black children, Olivet Hill among them. The only high school, enrolling 6 boys and 24 girls, was in Chestertown. Students from the outlying parts of the county had to be able to afford to board in Chestertown to be able to attend and not be needed to supplement the family income. A few went away to high school, especially to Princess Anne and Dover. The 1924 school report shows 21 one-teacher black schools and 3 two-teacher schools; Olivet Hill enrolled 14 boys and 15 girls. Mrs. Sarah Chambers, now of Quaker Neck, was a teacher at Olivet Hill about 1930; she boarded at a home in the community, as was customary for teachers in the rather isolated, rural schools. By 1934 there were 20 black schools; Olivet Hill had 21 boys and 19 girls. In 1944, when school consolidation finally had affected black schools as well as white, though later, there were just nine schools for black children, Olivet Hill among them. The enrollment was 7 boys and 24 girls, even though all the other First District schools except Sandfield School near Millington had closed and children were bused to the surviving ones (for instance, from Sassafras, Davis Hill, Golts and Massey). It appears that the second major black exodus (the first being during world war I) was underway.

The Olivet Hill school continued unusually late for such a small, outmoded building (there never was indoor plumbing). It was closed in 1958 and the property purchased by the church (WH6 55/521), which then used it for a Sunday School building and church hall, as probably had been the case all along, given the traditionally close relationship between church and school in Kent County's black communities. (The students were bused to Garnett School in Chestertown until the integration of the county schools in the late 1960s, when they began to attend school in Galena.) Even after the major structural collapse inside the church about 1979, when the church was abandoned and the congregation joined John Wesley Church in Sassafras, the old school building was retained for Sunday School use. It is still used for that purpose, for the children of the area.

Eleanora M. Lynn, "A History of Education in Kent County, Maryland," unpublished typescript chapter of forthcoming history of Kent County. Rock Hall, Md.: n.d.

J. D. B. DeBow, Statistical View of the United States. . . Being a Compendium of the Seventh Census. . . Washington: A. O. P. Nicholson, Public Printer, 1854.

Anecdotal Kent County Schools history and selected school reports, typescript at Cliffs School, prepared by Kent County Retired Teachers Association, n.d.



4357  
4356  
4355  
20'

GALENA 11 MI.  
0.2 MI. TO MO. 290  
4353

SASSAFRAS

CECIL  
KENT CO

RIVER

FOX HOLE  
LANDING

K-560

Hen Island

Wilson Point

Budd Ldg

Mill Creek

OK-153

banding Strip

OK-632

OK-156

OK-293

OK-302

OK-152

Galena

Olivet Hill

OK-597

OK-592

OK-344

OK-586

Woodall

BM  
63

X 76

MILLINGTON QUADRANGLE



K-586

Olivet Hill Public School

Olivet Hill, near Galena

M. Q. Fallaw - 8/4/85

View to southeast

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K-586

Olivet Hill Public School

Olivet Hill, near Galena

M. Q. Fallaw - 8/4/85

View to west

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