

K-612

Circa 1745, 1790, 1842

Site of Shrewsbury Chapel; Site of North Kent Parish Church

Near Massey

Private

The chapel-of-ease of Shrewsbury Parish was located on the north side of the Massey-Delaware road a little less than a mile from the Massey crossroads. The road is an old colonial route from Kent County into the Lower Counties of Pennsylvania (Delaware), early called the road from Georgetown to Duck Creek (now near Smyrna, Delaware). Not far to the east of the chapel site is Pudding Branch. The remains of the chapel lot are between the public road and a large 1970s house to the north of it. Part of the open area appears very slightly sunken, with an east-west axis, which may indicate the location of an old foundation. To the east of the open area is a grove of trees, really a thicket, in which a few grave stones are said to remain. The old chapel lot has shrunk considerably from its original size, whether by sale or by encroachment. The site is important for being the location of the first chapel-of-ease established by Shrewsbury Parish, in the late 1740s. It was the site of two chapel buildings, the later to become the first church of the new North Kent Parish in 1855. The first chapel building was frame; it had a later wing added to it, and still later a gallery. In 1790, surprisingly given the general condition of the Episcopal Church in Maryland after disestablishment and the ending of partial support from poll taxes, the parish determined to build a new, brick chapel, and the work was begun. However, the brick chapel continued for years to be unfinished, and it was only by the 1840s that it was fit for use. Not long thereafter the Episcopalians who frequented the chapel because they lived near it began to petition to have Shrewsbury Parish divided and the chapel established as the seat of a new parish. In 1855 this was finally done, and the old brick chapel was consecrated as the church of the new North Kent Parish. In the 1870s a frame parsonage was built to the west of the Methodist church that itself was to the west of the church. It burned during the 1970s. In the 1880s, possibly with the condition of the building deteriorating and with a desire to be closer to the village of Massey, the site was abandoned and a new church built farther to the west at the edge of the village. A new cemetery was established there as well, and some of the old graves seem to have been moved to it.

7. Description

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NOT APPLICABLE

Condition

excellent
 good
 fair

deteriorated
 ruins
 unexposed

Check one

unaltered
 altered

Check one

original site
 moved date of move _____

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

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The remains of the chapel lot are between the public road and a large 1970s house to the north of it. Part of the open area appears very slightly sunken, with an east-west axis, which may indicate the location of an old foundation. To the east of the open area is a grove of trees, really a thicket, in which a few grave stones are said to remain. To the west of the chapel lot, past the house's recent driveway, is the disrupted remnant of the cemetery of the Massey Methodist Church (K-613). To the west of that are the burned, unre-moved ruins of the 1870s rectory for the chapel, built after the congregation had become independent and established itself as North Kent Parish. Only ruins and remnants remain of this former religious clustering.

The old chapel lot has shrunk considerably from its original size, whether by sale or by encroachment. Originally 4-1/2 acres, it now appears far smaller, perhaps not even a half acre. It is shown on tax maps but acreage not given.

8. Significance

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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/
<input checked="" 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 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 type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates Circa 1745, 1790, **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 site is important for being the location of the first chapel-of-ease established by Shrewsbury Parish, in the late 1740s. It was the site of two chapel buildings, the latter to become the first church of the new North Kent Parish in 1855. The first chapel building was frame; it had a later wing added to it, and still later a gallery. In 1790, surprisingly given the general condition of the Episcopal Church in Maryland after disestablishment and the ending of partial support from poll taxes, the parish determined to build a new, brick chapel, and the work was begun. However, the brick chapel continued for years to be unfinished, and it was only by the 1840s that it was fit for use. Not long thereafter the Episcopalians who frequented the chapel because they lived near it began to petition to have Shrewsbury Parish divided and the chapel established as the seat of a new parish. In 1855 this was finally done, and the old brick chapel was consecrated as the church of the new North Kent Parish. In the 1870s a frame parsonage was built to the west of the Methodist church that itself was to the west of the church. It burned during the 1970s. In the 1880s, possibly with the condition of the building deteriorating and with a desire to be closer to the village of Massey, the site was abandoned and a new church built farther to the west at the edge of the village. A new cemetery was established there as well, and some of the old graves seem to have been moved to it.

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The land within Shrewsbury Parish's boundaries at the time the parish was officially established, in 1692, was in Cecil County, not Kent County. In fact, the official name of the parish was South Sassafras (or Sassafrax) Parish; there was also a North Sassafras Parish (and still is) on the north side of the river. After 1706, however, the Sassafras River was re-established as the northern boundary of Kent County.

The parish was a large, elongated one, and the church, between present-day Harmony Corner and Locust Grove, was not centrally located, to the disadvantage of colonists in the northeastern part of the county. The site where the chapel was located was ten or eleven miles away from the Shrewsbury Parish church, a long distance to travel over poor roads and in bad weather. By 1745 parishioners in the northeastern part of the parish asked for a chapel in their area. Old vestry minutes record their plea: "The inhabitants of the Upper Hundred of Shrewsbury Parish being in great measure deprived by their great distance from the parish church of the benefits of divine service therein, did agree to build a chapel for the worship of Almighty God by voluntary contribution and in order thereto they chose the following persons to be commissioners to manage and undertake the same." (DeProspero, p. 49) The commissioners included the rector, George William Forester, the long-time able leader of the parish in the mid eighteenth century. A George Lenegars gave three acres of land west of Pudding Branch, and another acre and a half was added later.

Apparently Daniel Massey and Henry Clarke were engaged to build the chapel. A frame chapel was built, 42 feet by 25 feet, with a hipped roof. It contained 35 pews. The building proceeded slowly. By 1748 it was ready for window glazing. "Daniel Massey was asked to find plank and finish the ceiling, and to cut a window by the pulpit. Churchwarden Samuel Davis was asked to underpin the chapel for a salary of eight pounds current money. Although not completely finished, the chapel was evidently being used by this time." (DeProspero, p. 50) The parish petitioned the court for an additional allotment from the poll tax for the established church to be able to finish the chapel, but only the amount legally allotted for a chapel was granted, 6 pounds of tobacco per poll. Pews were sold, as was the custom, to parishioners to help pay off the debt. The church yard was surveyed and in 1749 it was fenced. The chapel yard was later fenced. There are recorded descriptions of the sort of fencing used. After completing and financing an addition to the parish church, subscriptions were solicited for a chapel addition, in June 1755. By October 1756 it was completed, and parishioners purchased all or parts of the 23 added pews. A well was dug and bricked in 1756.

By 1760 the chapel was already in need of repair, "and the vestry contracted Alexander Gourerly to reshingle the outside of the building with six-inch wide white oak planks. Gourerly was also asked to put blocks at the door and planks over the sills of the door." (Ibid, p. 54) The fencing was also repaired at this time.

With the area's population evidently growing, James Burgin (Burgan) was
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engaged in 1767 to build a gallery and stair in the chapel's added section. It is not entirely clear if the following was to be another new addition or is a description of the addition itself, to which the gallery and stair were to be added. "The L-shaped addition was to have eight pews on the end and four on the side, each with paneled doors and fronts. Two windows, each with twelve sash lights, were to be cut above the gallery. Burgin was asked to complete the work in three months, and was paid 41 pounds for doing so. In November, parishioners subscribed to pews in the addition to the gallery in the chapel...." Other repairs were made to the grounds, including re-fencing the chapel yard with "well-tarred locust posts and pine planks, making it 160-feet square." (Ibid., pp. 55-56)

Despite the turmoil of the Revolutionary War and the problems for the parish caused by the disestablishment of the Anglican church, it continued as part of the new Protestant Episcopal Church. However, no longer could public tax money be used to pay part of the expenses of operating church and chapel. Subscriptions had to be solicited for support of the rector and for repairs, as was the case in 1784 (p. 131). The parish seemed not to be faring badly after the Revolution, considering the circumstances. At the General Convention in 1788 in Baltimore, a vestryman reported that the vestry "is possessed of 448 pounds in well secured bonds. There are two churches, both out of repair, and some plate." (p. 134)

In 1790 the vestry boldly undertook the project of building a new chapel. New construction in Maryland Episcopal churches at this time was a rarity. In May, 1790, the vestry advertised in the Wilmington newspaper "for workmen to submit proposals for the building of a new chapel near the site of the old one in Massey." The new chapel was to be built of brick, and evidently the parishioners rose to the challenge, pledging more than £457. Brick work was begun in April, 1792 by Pearce Veale. "Cedar shingles were ordered from Carolina and delivered to Georgetown." (p. 135) Work on the chapel proceeded slowly. "In May, 1793, the Shrewsbury vestry asked" two vestrymen "to count the bricks in the chapel and examine the workmanship. They later reported that the chapel contained 22,700 bricks, but it was still unfinished." A little more than a year later a new fundraising device was attempted. The church petitioned the General Assembly for a lottery, but the outcome of the petition is not known. In this period the old, frame chapel was taken down, evidently leaving the chapel worshipers with no building usable for worship. The financial condition of the parish worsened, most likely due to inroads made by the Methodists into the membership of the parish. During this period Methodism was sweeping through the county. By 1808 (p. 143) the parish was described as being "in a torpid state; only 1 male and 11 female communicants, not a single one makes the responses, though some of the females retain the good old fashion of kneeling in prayer." Yet the vestry had raised almost \$2,000 the preceding year by lottery to repair the old church and finish the new chapel. Evidently the chapel had a roof but no doors or windows and was hence open to the weather. Prospects were not good for the completion of the chapel either, since between 1808 and 1820 there seems to have been no rector, and during several years the vestry did not meet at all. There evidently was not much point in having a chapel if there were barely any parishioners. In
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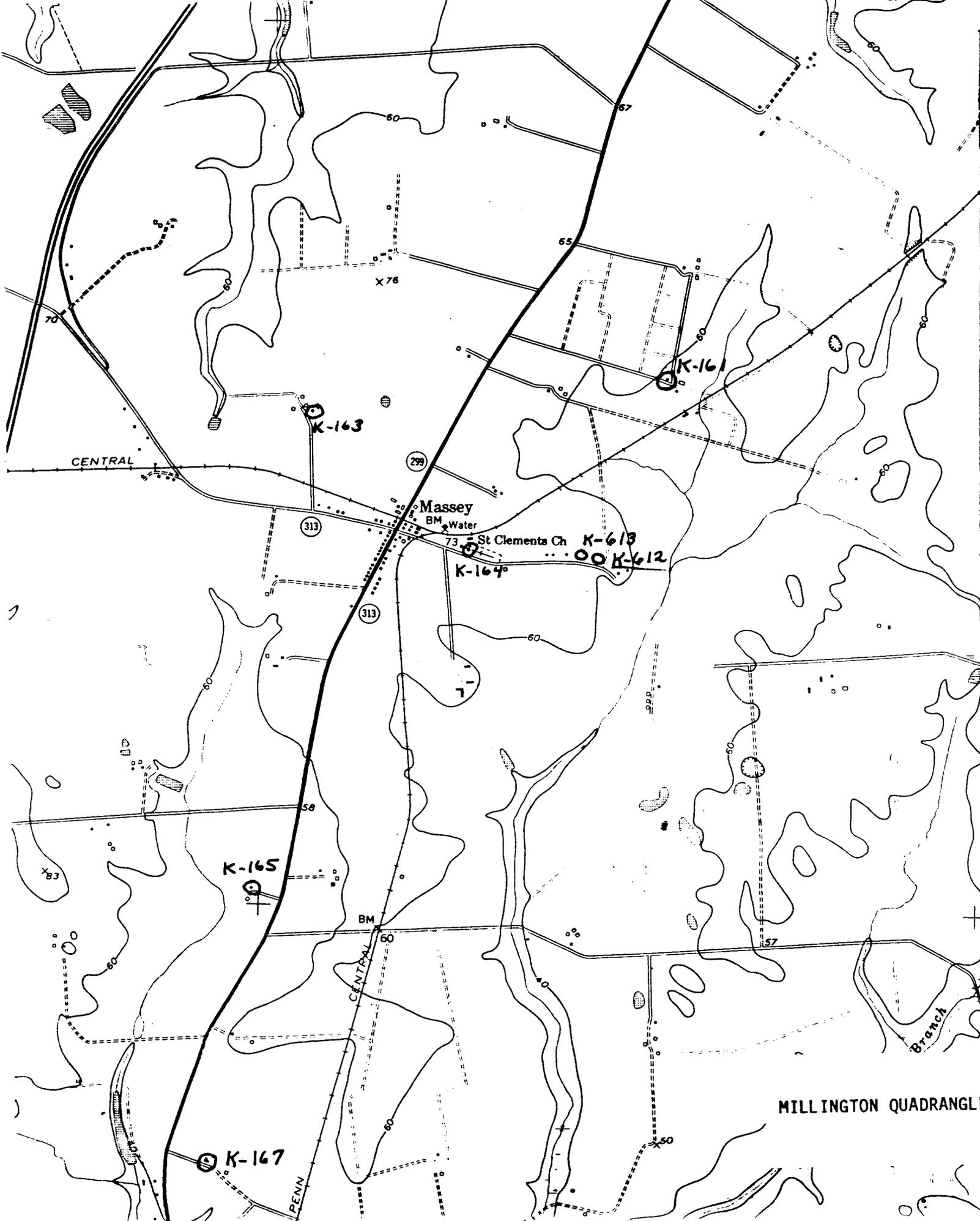
1820 a new rector reported that "The chapel in this parish at the head of Chester [inaccurate location] is in a ruinous state." The parish next concerned itself with building a new main church, which was finally consecrated in 1840.

Work proceeded on the chapel during 1841, due to contributions, and in 1841 it was pronounced nearly ready for use. The communion table from the church was sent to the chapel. At the 1842 convention the rector reported good activity in the lower (church) part of the parish but was dissatisfied with the upper parish work: "The building has been repaired during the last year, but there are very few, it is feared, belonging to it, who have any real attachment to the Church and her institutions." By 1843 \$800 was still owed on the chapel, though later repairs brought the debt to \$1500. By the late 1840s the chapel was reported to be in good repair. The gallery of the chapel was reported as being used for parishioners' servants.

In 1851 the parish was most boosted by the Rev. Clement F. Jones's payment of the final \$400 owed on the chapel repairs. He was the rector of Emmanuel Church in Chestertown and because of his generosity the chapel came to bear the name of St. Clement. During this period there was talk of splitting the parish because of distance. The upper section parishioners began submitting petitions to the convention for that action in 1851, but it was not until 1855 that it was approved and parish boundaries redrawn. The chapel was consecrated as St. Clement's Church in 1855, using the old chapel building. The new parish was named North Kent Parish.

The old chapel building was used until the 1880s, when a new church was built closer to the crossroads village of Massey. It was at this time that the Massey area enjoyed considerable growth and prosperity. The railroads arrived in 1869-1870, making Massey a junction town. It was undoubtedly thought wise to abandon the old site and move closer to the village.

It is not known now when the old brick chapel building was taken down.



MILLINGTON QUADRANGLE