

HISTORIC CONTEXT REPORT

“A Harvest in the Open for Saving Souls” The Camp Meetings of Montgomery County



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Prepared for the Maryland Historical Trust

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Cover photo: Spencerville Camp Meeting (see page 68 for photo credit)

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Nineteenth-century Montgomery County was an ideal locale for the American ‘camp meeting,’ a phenomenon that started in the mid-1700s and has endured into the present day. The camp meeting was a religious gathering set in nature - a grove, a clearing on a farm, or a seaside spot. The meeting was characterized by large audiences attending religious services and camping at the site of those services for an extended period of time. At the writing of this report, the local camp meeting tradition is at risk of completely dying out, for only one of the four, primary camp meetings of the Montgomery County remains active and it is threatened.

The importance of documenting this tradition is critical and twofold: First, the camp meetings belong to both a national and local folklore tradition that faces obstacles to its continuance. It is important to capture the voices, faces, and stories of those who participated in the evangelical revivals, many of whom represent the last generation to offer us authentic oral histories. These oral histories offer up an important aspect of American folklore; specifically, the overwhelming appeal of outdoor spiritual revivals. Second, Montgomery County’s camp meetings represent a vernacular architecture and quasi-religious cultural landscape worth recording, especially because the value of the relatively open land, the lack of funds needed to preserve multiple buildings, and highway projects all threaten to erase camp meetings sites from the map.

Those that remain intact are immediately recognizable for their distinction from ordinary housing developments. Being communal in nature, the camps were public spaces in the sense that the experience they provided was intended to be enjoyed by many and private in the sense that, as cultural environments, they were worlds unto themselves, removed from the everyday comings and goings of their surroundings. Their settings were chosen for specific qualities, such as proximity to water sources, high elevation, and mature trees. The building types that were erected were standard for camp meeting typology (tabernacles, dining halls, cottages), but the degree to which they were rather fanciful (such as at Washington Grove) or purely utilitarian (such as at Damascus) depended on the time period in which they were constructed, as well as the socio-economic standing of the families that attended. Often less permanent than other building types, the structures of the camp meeting are in peril. They require funding beyond the means of most churches and/or camp sponsors and a well-crafted preservation support program to enable the buildings’ continued use.

Montgomery County had much to commend itself as a strong contender for the camp meeting tradition that spread nationwide, given its long agrarian history, pastoral and wooded landscapes, location within the Washington-Baltimore corridor, and sizeable Methodist population. The county was one of many camp-meeting areas scattered across the country, neither the most famous nor the best documented, but representative of a significant living tradition that is waning, at least in the state of Maryland. Attending camp meeting meant building an arbor or tabernacle, pitching tents and/or erecting cottages, and praying for salvation in a metaphoric biblical wilderness. Up until the mid-20th century, Montgomery County’s camp meetings took place in July and/or August. This time of year was called the “laying by time,” a hiatus between the first grain harvest and late summer corn cutting/fall planting. Through the camp meetings,

Montgomery County church and lay leaders of mostly Methodist denominations offered their congregations the opportunity to gather together in a natural setting to experience a fervent embrace of religion. As one Montgomery County campgoer eloquently put it, camp meeting was a “harvest in the open for the saving of souls.”¹

This historic context report, the Camp Meetings of Montgomery County, serves to highlight that tradition. The report was written as one of several products funded by a Certified Local Government (CLG) Grant to the Montgomery County Historic Preservation Section under the Federal Fiscal Year 2003 program. As for the definition of the context of this report, Montgomery County’s camp meetings are defined by the geographic borders of Montgomery County, Maryland; the time period of circa 1800 to 1955; and the National Register themes of Religion, Community, Landscape Architecture, and Architecture. The historic context report is one of five products submitted to the Maryland Historical Trust under the CLG grant, the others being: 1) a Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form for the Damascus Camp Meeting, 2) three taped, indexed, and transcribed oral history interviews with people familiar with the Emory Grove Camp Meeting, 3) black-and-white photographs and 35mm color slides of relevant individuals associated with Emory Grove, and 4) a final Survey Report.

The historic context report contains several different sections of text. Since Montgomery County’s camp meetings should properly be seen in the greater context of the camp meeting origins nationwide (Community) and the Methodist tradition (Religion), both of these subjects are discussed briefly at the start. Following that, the report focuses on the detailed stories of the four prominent camp meetings in Montgomery County and their role as cultural traditions that defined the county’s dual role as an independent agrarian community and a conveniently located escape from the metropolises of Washington and Baltimore. These camp meetings include Washington Grove, Emory Grove, Spencerville and Damascus. **(Figure I-1)** Finally, the report looks at the cultural landscape aspects of the camp meeting (from the perspective of qualities defined by the National Park Service) and the vernacular architecture that is the hallmark of the camp meeting heritage.

NOTES

¹ “History of Emory Grove M.E. Church,” contained in the vertical file of “Churches: Methodist: Emory Grove” at the Montgomery County Historical Society. Typed manuscript with editing.

The Camp Meetings of Montgomery County

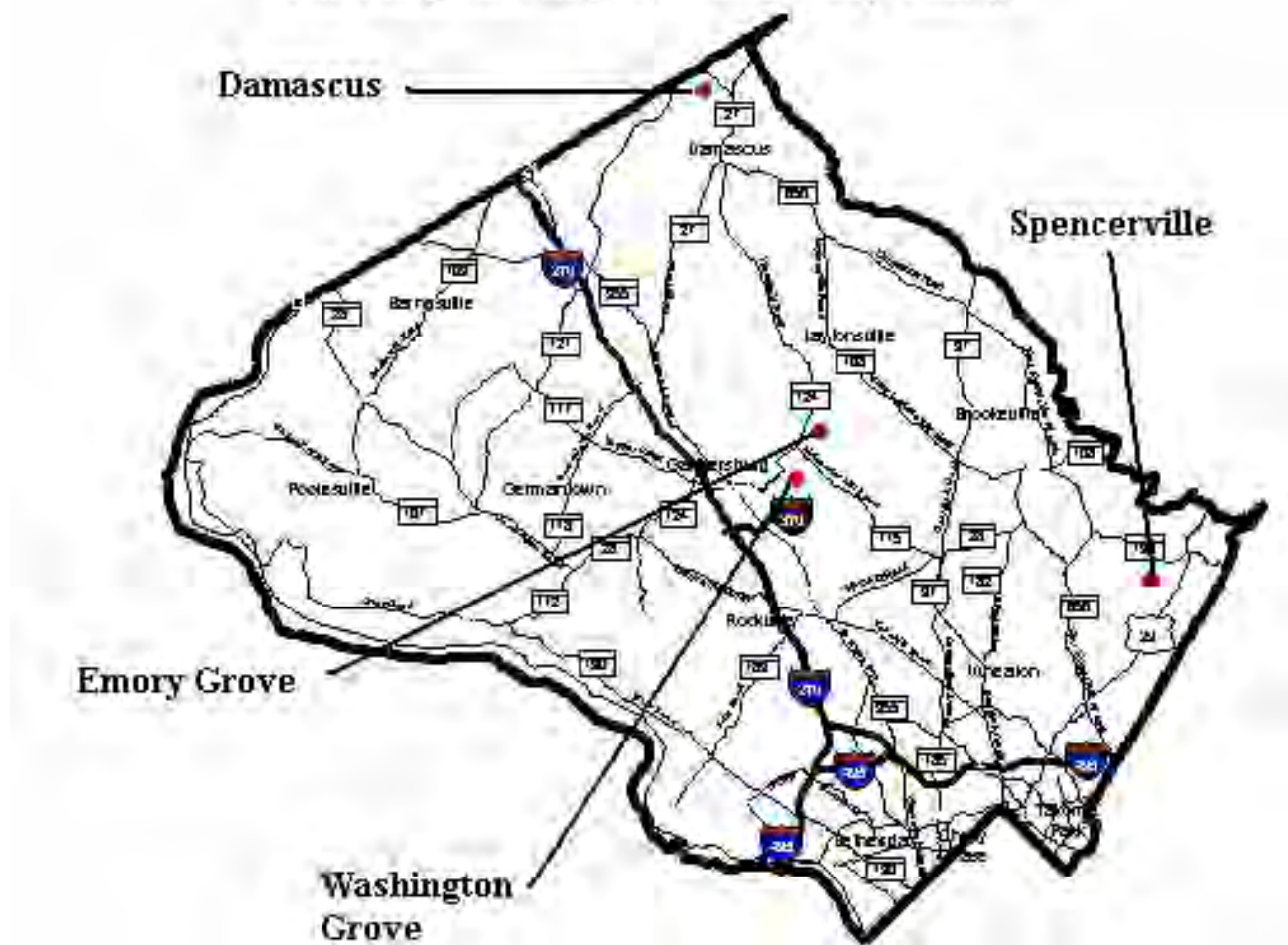


Figure I-1: Map of Montgomery County, Maryland showing the locations of the four, prominent camp meetings studied for this report.

II. OVERVIEW OF THE CAMP MEETING TRADITION

The origin of the camp meeting has long been linked to the frontier tradition, explained in terms of harsh environments and isolated populations that fostered a population eager for spiritual conversion. This analysis holds true, but is no longer thought to explain the sole root cause for the outdoor religious fervor that began in this country in the mid-18th century. For example, the American camp meeting is now believed to be part of the broader Scotch-Irish Presbyterian revivalism that originated in England in the early 18th century.¹ Other incipient American forces, such as increasing economic competition and political disarray, also are believed to have inspired the popularity of the camp meeting.

Nationally, and in Montgomery County, the camp meeting tradition can be divided into four periods based on the date of origin of the camp meetings. The four periods have been given names in this report just for the sake of identification:

- 1) The Frontier Period: 1790-1830
- 2) The Organizational Period: 1831-1860
- 3) The Religious Resort Period: 1861-1919
- 4) The Renewal Period: 1920-Present

During the first period, which stretched from 1790-1830, the main purpose of the meetings was to provide religious services in connection with frontier churches and to produce converts for the growing Baptist, Presbyterian, and Methodist denominations. The structures found at these early camp meetings were impermanent. Preachers gave their sermons from simple wooden stands, participants sat in the open on board or log benches, and people slept in canvas tents or boughs lashed together. **(Figure II-1)** By 1820, more than 1,000 of these frontier camp meetings had been held in the United States, drawing about a tenth of the country's population.² There are not many, if any, campgrounds that remain from this early period.

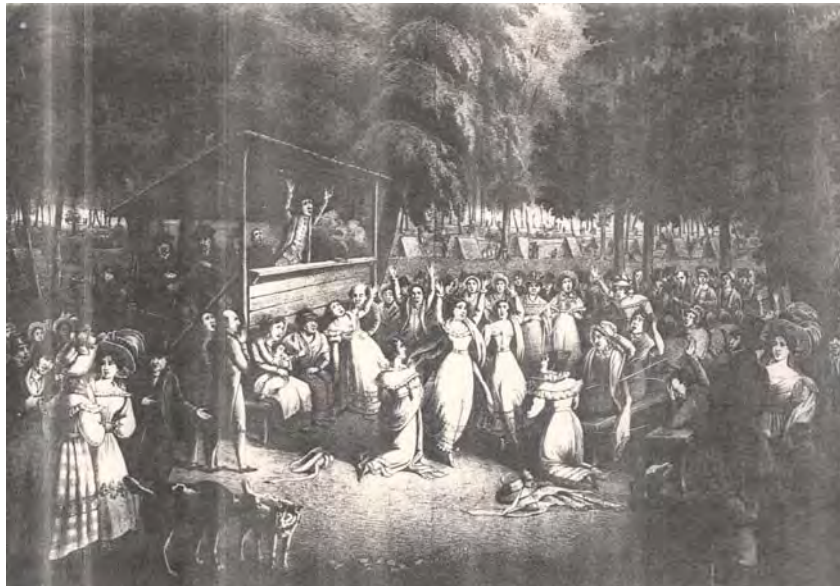


Figure II-1: Camp-Meeting, ca. 1810-1834, showing figures falling at the altar, or “mourner’s bench.” (Library of Congress)

Scholars generally acknowledge the earliest large-scale American camp meeting to have been held in August 1801 at the Cane Ridge Presbyterian Meetinghouse in Bourbon County, Kentucky, although earlier ones occurred in the Carolinas and Georgia. George Whitefield, an Englishman, led earlier experiential revivals during the “Great Awakening” that took place between 1720-1780. In North Carolina, Kentucky, and Tennessee, the camp meeting took hold with such a force that it became almost synonymous with the frontier’s manifestation of the “Second Great Awakening,” the religious fervor that characterized the period between 1790-1830. Maryland is said to have hosted its first camp meeting in 1803, near Baltimore.

The camp meeting experience in Kentucky in the early years was a group experience that dealt largely with the conversion of sinners, qualities that still characterize a true camp meeting today. The conversion process at early camp meetings had a particularly visceral aspect. The quality of falling was prevalent. It was initially seen as a sign that one was aware of one’s sinful nature and required salvation. One observer at Cane Ridge noticed several thousand people “swept down like the trees of the forest under the blast of the wild tornado.”³ The falling often was followed by shrieking and shouting. Despite differences in the population, the falling and particularly the encircling of the fallen by others, created a sense of community and a unifying thread in the overwhelmingly emotional camp experience.

In later years, the falling experience would transform into other “bodily exercises,” including: dancing, barking, running, rolling, and jerking (the last being where the entire body was convulsing). Those outside the tradition often found the camp meeting emotionalism quite disturbing. One Hungarian commentator, visiting the United States in 1852, described it this way. “. . . here in the West . . . people get spasmodic contortions and begin to roll, to jerk, to dance, and to bark in the camp meetings and the forest gatherings of the Methodists. They have visions and trances, and are thrown into a state of ecstasy similar to a protracted catalepsy. . . . The believers of spiritual manifestations are on a level with the early believers in witchcraft in New England.”⁴ The Cane Ridge meeting was characterized by such extreme fervor that, by 1805, it led to the abandonment of camp meetings by both the Presbyterians and the Baptists, leaving the Methodists to shape the meetings to their own ends.

A second period of camp meeting, lasting from 1831 to the start of the Civil War, was more organized than the first. These camp meetings featured permanent buildings, including tabernacles that were partially open to the air and rough board cottages. Religious services were sheltered by the large, frame pavilions known as an “arbors” in the South and “tabernacles” in the North. (Maryland’s were called “tabernacles.”) Private accommodations during this second phase were built according to local building traditions, but shared common features. For example, they all were small in scale and most had front porches. The porches often connected or almost connected to adjacent dwellings, forming a continuous promenade. The board or log cabins, still known as “tents,” were arranged in a series of circles or in a large square around the preacher’s stand, or tabernacle if one had been built. **(Figure II-2)** Extant, documented campgrounds from this era include Rock Springs (1828) and Pleasant Grove (1830) in North Carolina and Salem (1828) in Georgia.

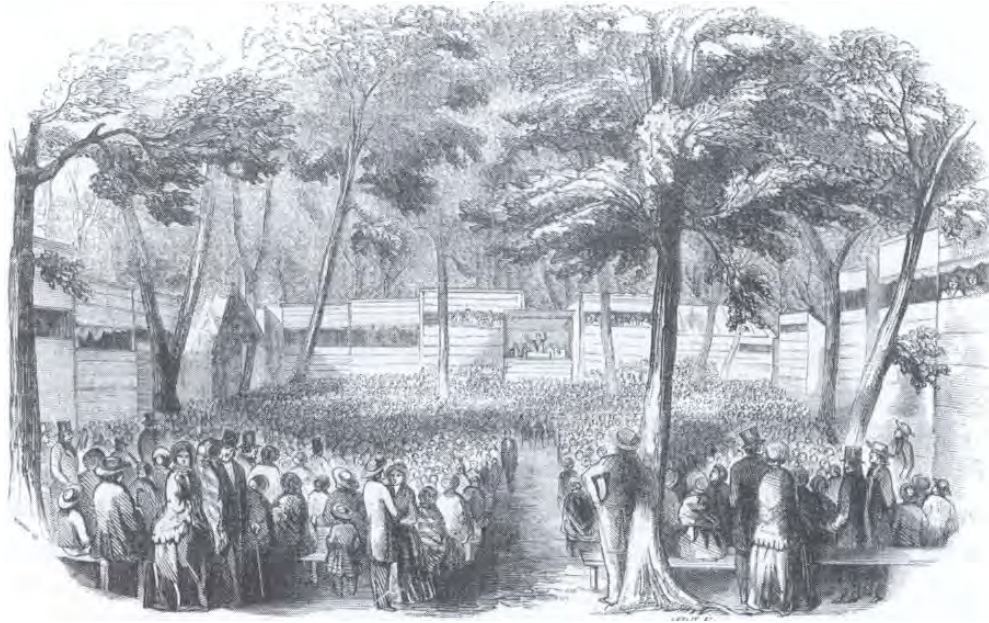
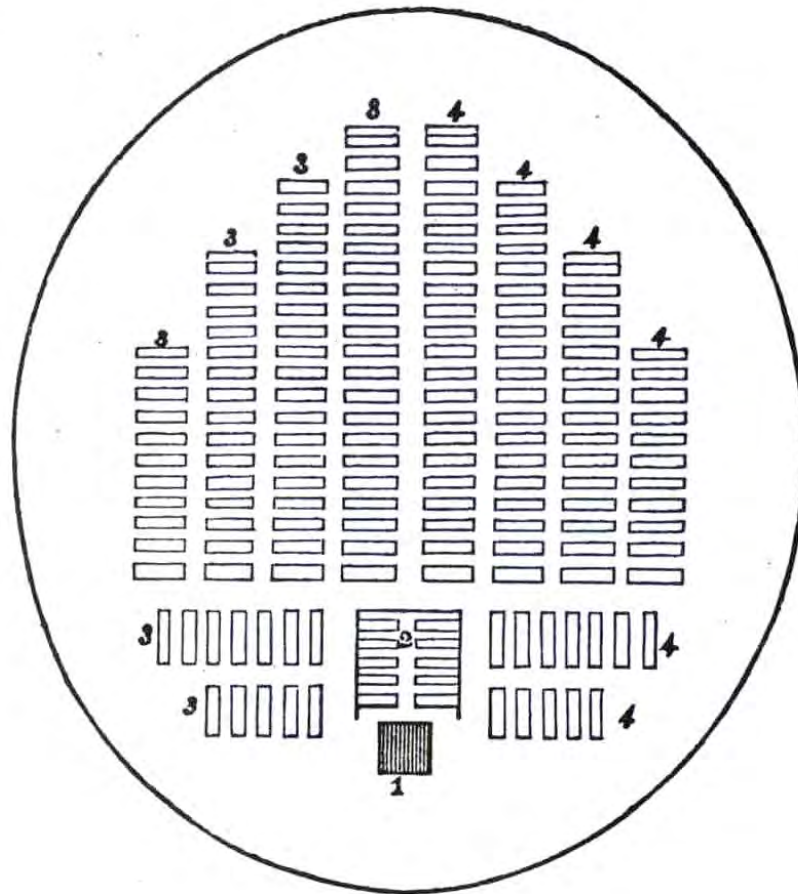


Figure II-2: Duck Creek Camp Meeting, 1852. (Gleason's Pictorial)

Much of the popular camp meeting's appeal was due to their relative accessibility to people of different backgrounds, races, and cultural identities. At least one historian argued that the camp meeting tradition took firm hold on American soil because it embraced religion for the "plain folk,"⁵ not just for the privileged. "Plain folk" were defined as the "great mass of antebellum Southern farmers and townspeople who were neither rich nor starving." In his book, *And They All Sang Hallelujah: Plain-Folk Camp-Meeting Religion, 1800-1845*, Dickson D. Bruce, Jr. stated that because "the new west . . . did not have the eloquent New England clergymen for daily fare, or the sight of white steeples above a village green, next best was to embrace the evangelistic 'camp meeting.' Back-hill folk, in particular, acquired a taste for exhortation under the stars."⁶ There were enough people desiring exhortation to support 1,000 camp meetings annually circa 1820.⁷

As the camp's popularity grew among Methodists during this second phase, preachers and religious observers associated with camp meetings strove to find links between the tradition and the Bible. The staunchest camp meeting advocates, like Reverend B.W. Gorham, cited comparisons between festivals described in the Old Testament (e.g., Sukkot and the Feast of Tabernacles) and the camp meeting, quoting references to biblical campouts: "Ye shall dwell in booths seven days, all that are Israelites born shall dwell in booths." Booths, in Gorham's mind, translated more nicely into canvas tents for camp meeting, as he felt actual wooden booths looked too much like "shanties."⁸

Increasingly, camp meeting organizers developed manuals describing the proper layout of the camp meeting grounds in a push for greater order. (**Figure II-3**) These manuals also included detailed information on how to run a camp meeting and appropriate rules of conduct, such as prohibiting liquor, establishing curfews, and separating women from men during services.



LEGEND :

1. Stand, or speakers' platform.
2. Altar.
3. Seats—ladies' side.
4. Seats—gentlemen's side.
- C. Circle on the outside of which the tents are to be built.

Figure II-3: Diagram within Reverend B.W Gorham's 1854 manual on how to lay out a campground. (Rev. B.W. Gorham, *Camp Meeting Manual*, 1854)

A third phase of the camp meeting tradition extended from the Civil War until World War I (1861-1919) and was characterized by its parallels to the resort/excursion phenomenon. During this period, the summer vacation came of age. Middle-class city-dwellers were eager to escape the heat, filth, and disease of the city, retreating to ocean and mountain destinations made accessible by newly opened railroad lines. In Washington, the Metropolitan Branch of the B&O Railroad opened in 1873. Washingtonians were concerned about malaria in a city built on a former swamp. Montgomery County, with its higher elevation, was attractive. Camp meetings became, in a manner of sorts, religious resorts—moral alternatives to the drinking and gambling that drew so many people to the secular resorts. Selected camp meeting sites were often located near existing secular resorts, providing Christian alternatives to such places as Saratoga Springs, New York and Atlantic City, New Jersey. Geometric patterns of circulation previously

established in earlier periods were developed in more detail in this third period, including such provisions as separate paths for vehicles and pedestrians and the clustering of tents and cottages in certain zones or “departments.” The camp meetings that were accessible to metropolitan areas, mainly on the eastern seaboard, were the best attended.

During this era, camp meetings expanded beyond religious services to become summer communities. Camp meeting associations provided recreation facilities—tennis courts and ball fields—and offered educational Chautauqua programs. Some communities became so popular that residents began to live there year-round, commuting to city jobs on the train that had first brought them there. A portion of Shelter Island, New York, off of Long Island, is an example of the exuberant third-phase of camp meeting construction. Opened as the Shelter Island Grove and Camp Meeting Association by Brooklyn-based clergy and laymen, the Gothic Revival architecture at the heart of that community routinely features second-story porches atop the extensive and elaborately articulated wraparound porches of the first floor. **(Figures II-4 and II-5)** The post-Civil War architecture dating to the same period at Oak Bluffs, the resort section of Martha’s Vineyard adjacent to the religious camp meeting there, reveals that irregular footprints and large scale houses there were associated more with the secular resort as opposed to the simpler, vernacular cottages of the Wesleyan Grove camp meeting that had preceded it.



Figure II-4: Fanciful gothic-arched porches at the affluent Methodist camp meeting of Shelter Island, New York. Source: Elizabeth Jo Lampl



Figure II-5: Refined cottage architecture at Shelter Island, New York. Source: Elizabeth Jo Lampl

Prior to 1865, the camp meeting at Sing-Sing in New York was probably the largest meeting. During its heyday, tens of thousands of people pitched tents or lived in cottages there.

Another highly popular camp meeting existed at Ocean Grove, New Jersey, where just twenty people established a camp meeting in July of 1869. The site has since grown to be one of the largest concentrations of Victorian summer housing in the country. By 1895, there were 1200 cottages, 600 tents, and 79 commercial establishments. Considered by some to be the largest and perhaps most successful of the third-phase camp meetings, the Ocean Grove Camp Meeting Association, a Methodist group, operated the community until 1979.⁹ During this third phase, Gothic Revival architecture of a mostly diminutive but fanciful character came to epitomize the Methodist camp meeting. By 1900, there were between 1,500 and 2,000 camp meetings each year, many of them between Maryland and New England.¹⁰

African-American campgrounds came of age during this period, as demonstrated locally by the success of Emory Grove, in Gaithersburg. But African Americans had been a vital part of the camp meeting tradition from their start. Not surprisingly, blacks were segregated to certain areas of the meeting ground in the days before they had their own camp meetings, as depicted in the row of “Negro Tents” on an 1809 drawing by Benjamin Henry Latrobe of a camp meeting located in Virginia. **(Figure II-6)** While a majority of northern Methodists theoretically rejected the notion of slavery and called for manumission, the South, including the border state of Maryland, was slower to respond. African-Americans were allowed to be at the same camp as whites because whites desired the services of black people, not because a majority of whites welcomed their attendance. At the start of the Civil War, the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church voted to “admonish all our preachers and People to keep themselves pure from this evil [slavery].” The Rockville Circuit, Baltimore Conference, which

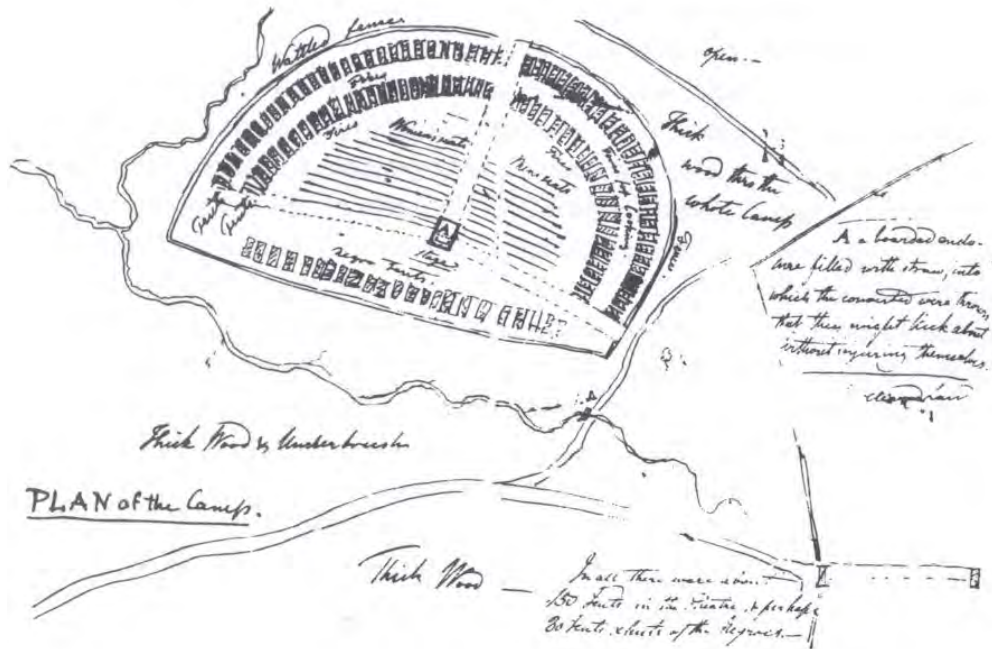


Figure II-6: Benjamin Latrobe’s sketch of an early Virginia meeting showing rows of “Negro Tents” separated from double rows of semicircular white tents, 1809. (Talbot Hamlin, *Benjamin Henry Latrobe*, 1955)

encompassed Montgomery County’s camp meetings, responded in 1866 by separating itself from the General Conference and declaring that it was “utterly opposed to the social and political equality of the Negro...”¹¹ The black churches within the Rockville Circuit responded by joining the Washington Mission Conference, organized in 1864 specifically for black Methodist Episcopal Churches.

While whites partook of their camp meeting activities, black slaves would enjoy their own preacher’s sermons at whatever part of the campground had been reserved for their tents. The services for blacks and whites were separate up until the last day of the camp meeting, and were sometimes even physically divided by a fence. On the last day of the meeting, however, sometimes there would be a “marching ceremony” that joined the two races, a rather surprisingly unifying act.

As mentioned, after emancipation the freed slaves formed a sizeable group of eager camp meeting goers on their own, both in the frontier and southern states and including Montgomery County. In Montgomery County, the foremost black camp meeting was held at Emory Grove, while a much smaller one was held starting in the 1950s in Boyds. On a national scale, there were African-American camp meetings at Antioch in Delaware and the more secular community of Oak Bluffs on Martha’s Vineyard, which had been founded in 1867, always drew a sizeable middle- and upper-middle-class African-American population.

The fourth and final phase of the camp meeting spanned the time period from the end of World War I to the present (1920-2004). With the advent of the automobile, the Depression, and changing social mores, many camp meetings declined in the early part of the century. For one thing, vacationers no longer depended upon the railroad for transportation and could travel routes of their own choosing. A few camp-meeting communities made the transition from summer camp meeting to year-round incorporated town, such as Washington Grove, but others were abandoned or engulfed by neighboring communities (**Figure II-7**). A minority of the camps was able to retain enough of an audience to continue just as they had, as a religious destination for a few summer weeks. In many rural communities, the annual picnic came to suffice in lieu of the camp meeting. An advertisement for such an event in Clarksville was taken out on July 31, 1941 in *The Sentinel*. It described the upcoming “Clarksville Picnic” in the “beautiful shady grove on the old church grounds” where fried chicken and supper would be served under a “large airy tent.” Unlike the camp meetings, however, there were the advertised attractions of the open-air dance pavilion and baseball game.¹²



Figure II-7: The wooded Grove Avenue in Washington Grove, which was established as a summer camp meeting in 1873 and transformed into a year-round town in 1937. (Montgomery County Historic Preservation Section)

Several new camp meetings were actually established during the course of the Great Depression. Two of these campgrounds still stand in Montgomery County as examples of this period of camp meeting construction. Twentieth-century camp goers continued the tradition of building cottages, but the exuberance of the Gothic Revival was replaced by the utilitarian nature of Depression architecture. The pattern upon the land of a prominently located tabernacle surrounded by a ring or horseshoe of cottages still dominated. Today, the fates of these Depression-era campgrounds remain in the balance, with most suffering from insufficient resources to maintain a fragile

building stock. **(Figure II-8)** But the evangelical fervor that accompanied the creation of the camp meeting on the frontier has far from died.



Figure II-8: Cottages at the open end of the “horseshoe” stand in disrepair at the Spencerville Camp Meeting. (Elizabeth Jo Lampl, Montgomery County Historic Preservation Section)

With spiritualism undergoing a renewal in the late 20th century, Kenneth O. Brown estimated 1,500 active camp meetings nationally as of 1998.¹³ At Spencerville in Montgomery County, as in the country at large, the evangelical spirit comes alive for a brief but joyous few days every July as a reminder of a tradition that once swept through the country.

NOTES

¹ Ellen Eslinger, *Citizens of Zion: The Social Origins of Camp Meeting Revivalism* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1999) xii.

² Kenneth O. Brown, *Holy Ground*, 1992, as described in Ellen Weiss' *City in the Woods* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1998) xii.

³ Eslinger, *Citizens of Zion*, 223.

⁴ Oscar Handlin, *This Was America*, Writings of T. and F. Pulszky, in 1852, 243.

⁵ Dickson D. Bruce, Jr. *And They All San Hallelujah: Plain-Folk Camp-Meeting Religion, 1800-1845* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press 1974) 4-5.

⁶ Harrison, Harry P. as told to Karl Detzer, *Culture Under Canvas: The Story of Tent Chautauqua* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1958).

⁷ Ellen Weiss, *City in the Woods: The Life and Design of an American Camp Meeting on Martha's Vineyard* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1987), Preface.

⁸ Weiss, *City in the Woods*, 8.

⁹ The founding body was the National Camp Meeting Association for the Promotion of Holiness.

¹⁰ See Weiss, *City in the Woods*, xii.

¹¹ "Appendix B," Typescript publication of minutes from the Methodist Conferences contained in the files of the Montgomery County Historical Society, under "Churches, Methodist."

¹² *The Sentinel*, July 31, 1941.

¹³ Weiss, *City in the Woods*, Preface.

III. METHODISM AND THE CAMP MEETING

The story of the camp meeting cannot be told without relaying its roots in Methodism. Despite the camp meeting's Presbyterian origins and early Baptist inclinations, it was the Methodists who adopted the tradition and made it their own. Methodists were especially adept at using the camp meeting format to convert souls and impart purity. In contrast, the Presbyterians were not at all inclined to the dramatic nature of the camp meetings, as described in the following statement by Amanda Berry Smith. A black woman born into slavery in Long Green, Maryland, Smith became a worldwide, itinerant preacher. She described the actions of her father's "mistress," and friends in the antebellum period: "These young people went [to Cockey's Camp Ground, outside of Baltimore] just as a kind of picnic, and to have a good time looking on. They were staunch Presbyterians, and had no affinity with anything of that kind. They went more out of curiosity, to see the Methodists shout and hollow [sic], than anything else; because they did shout and hollow in those days, tremendously."¹

Methodism was initiated in England by John Wesley, Charles Wesley, and George Whitefield. Together, these men developed a new, methodical way of approaching scriptures, initially under the umbrella of the Church of England. They were dubbed "Methodists" while they were students at Oxford, where they met regularly in the second quarter of the 18th century to study the Bible. They also fasted, abstained from all entertainment, and visited the sick and poor.

John Wesley's teachings elaborated on the doctrine of perfection, also known as sanctification, holiness, perfect love, freedom from sin, and Christian perfection. In Wesley's view, a sinner could be immediately forgiven for sinning and "cleansed of the possibility of sinning."² Despite believing in a methodical approach to the scriptures, the Methodists were given to emotional preaching and singing. Wesley and other Methodists began preaching fervently out-of-doors in England in the second half of the 18th century, while advocating stricter doctrines and the need to sustain salvation over the period of one's lifetime. A critical component of the Methodist experience was the singing of hymns, many of which were written by John's brother, Charles Wesley. At camp meetings, hymns were often "lined," meaning the singing preacher read two lines and then the congregation would sing them back.

The Anglican Church viewed the Methodists - with their intensive gesturing and volatile preaching - as fanatics. Within their own movement, Wesley and Whitefield eventually split; Wesley adopting the Arminian view of free will and Whitefield the Calvinistic view of predestination. The break with the Church of England came following the American Revolution, when the established church refused to ordain American ministers and Wesley did not. For this reason, Wesley formed the Methodist Church in America in 1784. Once he returned to England, he left his associate Francis Asbury primarily in charge of spreading the Methodist message in America. In 1784, following Asbury's consecration as a bishop, the Methodist Episcopal Church of America was born in Baltimore.

The Methodists' accepted use of lay preachers and exhorters made the camp meeting an easy choice for spreading their message. Lay preachers known as circuit riders began crossing the landscape by horseback to spread the word of Methodism. By 1805, Francis Asbury was already referring to the camp meetings as "Methodism's harvest time" and hoped that there would be

600 camp meetings by 1810. His expectations were realized. As noted above, it has been estimated that in 1820 alone, nearly one thousand camp meetings were held.³ Lay exhorters who were routinely licensed by the Quarterly Conference showed the congregation the practical application of the preacher's sermon by calling out names of the sinners and summoning them forward for conversion at the altar. (The altar was also known as the mourner's bench or anxious seat.)

Within the Methodist church in America, factions developed over the rigor of belief and its practice. Over forty new denominations splintered off from John Wesley's original Methodist Church, including the Free Methodists and the Holiness Church, both of which held onto the camp meeting tradition. In addition to dividing over how to practice Methodism, the church also split on the issue of slavery.

The formal division between the Methodist Episcopal Church North and South occurred in 1845. Previously, blacks had a slightly more congenial, although far from equal, relationship with whites in the Methodist church. This relationship was expressed by the fact that the two races sometimes met together in prayer-meetings, revivals, Sunday schools, and preaching services. During church, the blacks sat in the back of the building, within a separate gallery, coming and leaving buildings by a separate door. In worst cases, blacks listened to services while standing outside.⁴ As already mentioned, African-Americans were part of the camp meeting tradition from the beginning, but equality was not common practice.

At the start of the Civil War, the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church voted to "admonish all our preachers and People to keep themselves pure from this evil [slavery]." The Rockville Circuit, Baltimore Conference, which encompassed Montgomery County's camp meetings, responded in 1866 by separating itself from the General Conference and declaring that it was "utterly opposed to the social and political equality of the Negro...."⁵ Sympathetic white churches responded by acting as abolitionists. These groups included the Wesleyan Methodists and Free Methodists, with the latter group very involved in the Underground Railroad. The black churches within the Rockville Circuit joined the Washington Mission Conference, organized in 1864 specifically for black Methodist Episcopal Churches. Thus, blacks in Montgomery County started building their own churches following the Civil War, and many of these were Methodist or African Methodist Episcopal. Some of those in the area included: Howard Chapel, Etchison Chapel, Emory Grove, Mt. Zion, and Brooke Grove.

Whether one followed the northern or southern tradition, Methodism retained a strong hold in Maryland in 1850, when its prevalence was charted on a map of the country as a whole. **(Figure III-1)** A list of the known 18th and 19th century camp meetings in Maryland outside of Montgomery County would include, but not be limited to: Deal's Island Camp Meeting in Somerset County, Maryland (by 1861); Emory Grove Camp Meeting in Glyndon, Maryland (1868); Union Grove Camp Meeting in Garrett County (founding date unknown); Wesley Camp meeting (1866) in Dorsey, Anne Arundel County; Dorsey's Woods near Jessup (second-half, 19th century); Annapolis Junction (site and date unknown); along the Susquehanna River at "Woodlawn"⁶ (site and date unknown); and Jackson's Grove, near Odenton, Maryland.⁷

It was not until 1939 that the separate northern and southern branches of the Methodist church were reunited. The Emory Grove and Washington Grove camp meetings belong to the United Methodist tradition. That church was formed almost thirty years later, in 1968, when the Methodist Church and the Evangelical United Brethren merged. The Spencerville Camp Meeting in Montgomery County is an example of a Free Methodist camp meeting founded in the 20th century. The Damascus Camp Meeting, which ceased in 2002, was part of the Holiness movement.

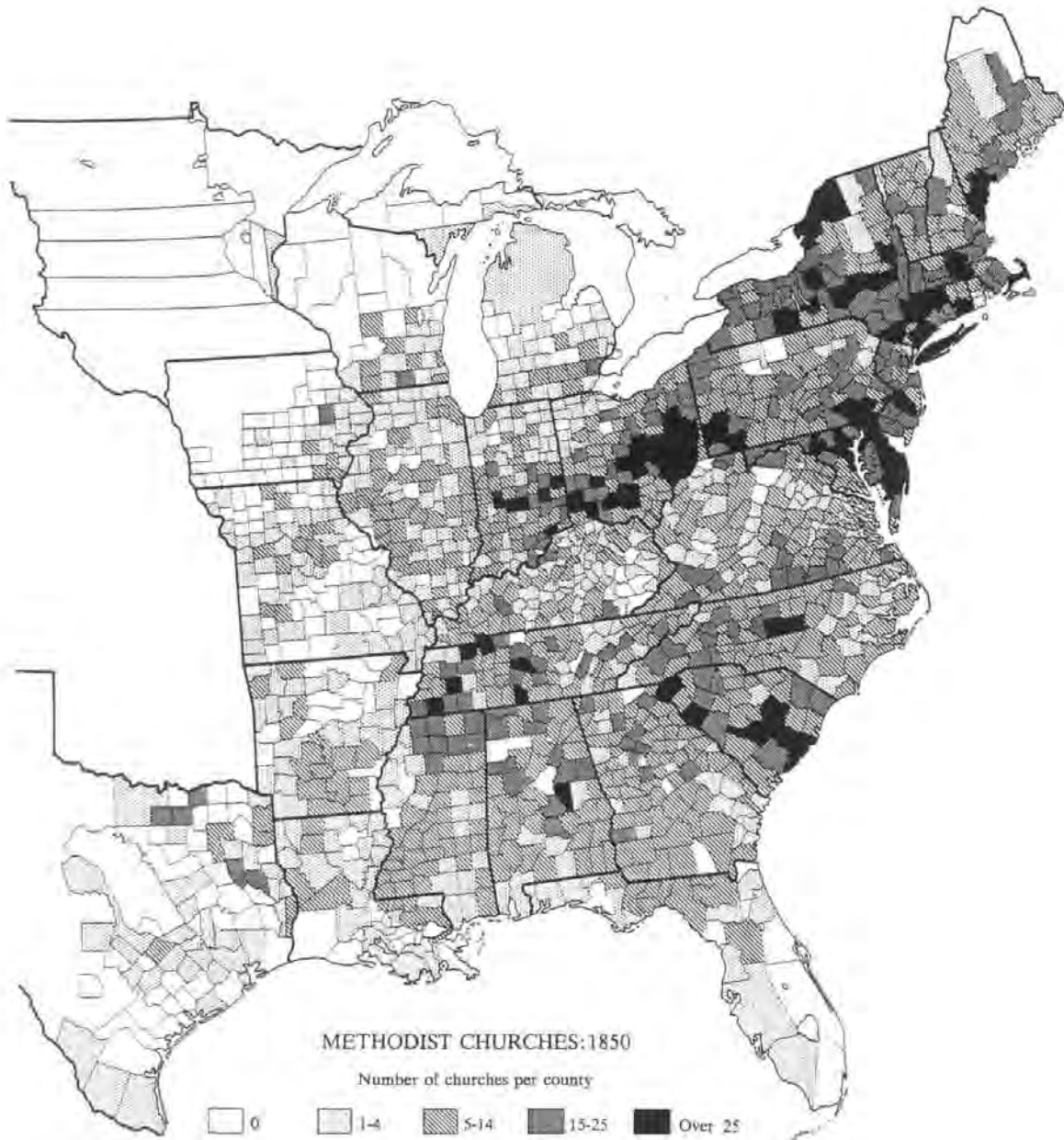


Figure III-1: Dark patches show the prevalence of the Methodist Church in Maryland by the mid-19th century. Source: Edwin Gaustad. *Historical Atlas of Religion* (Harper & Row, 1962)

NOTES

¹ Bert James Loewenberg and Ruth Bogin, ed. *Black Women in Nineteenth-Century American Life* (University Park and London: The Pennsylvania State University Press), 144-145. Partial copy from the Enoch Pratt Free Library.

² *Ibid.*, 8.

³ "The National Holiness Camp Meeting Movement," *The Holiness Digest* (Christian Holiness Partnership), Fall 1998, 4.

⁴ "Jerusalem Church and the Methodist Episcopal Church in Rockville," article excerpted from a paper written by Eileen McGuckian and published by the Montgomery Historical Society in 1972," filed under "Churches, Methodist" at the Montgomery County Historical Society.

⁵ "Appendix B," Typescript publication of minutes from the Methodist Conferences contained in the files of the Montgomery County Historical Society, under "Churches, Methodist."

⁶ Charles A. Parker, "The Camp Meeting on the Frontier and the Methodist Religious Resort in the East – Before 1900," *Methodist History*, Volume XVIII, April 1980, Number 3, pp. 185-186.

⁷ Page Milburn, "Washington Grove, a Reminiscence," Manuscript from the files of the Baltimore-Washington Conference, Commission on Archives and History, Lovely Lane Museum, Baltimore.

IV. THE CAMP MEETINGS OF MONTGOMERY COUNTY

The impetus for the Camp Meeting tradition in Montgomery County was multi-faceted. Factors behind the camp meeting tradition included, but were not limited to:

- 1) Desire for relief from the stagnancy of a summer in Washington with its perceived threat of disease;
- 2) Natural amenities to be found in the county, such as higher elevations, wooded groves, open space for pasturage, etc.
- 3) A strong Methodist base, and a strong African Methodist Episcopal base;
- 4) Creation of mission churches in the county's rural, outpost communities; and,
- 5) Establishment of post-Reconstruction "kinship" communities

The four, primary camp meetings of Montgomery County are found in the central, northern, and eastern portions of the county. Two of the camp meetings date to the third or fourth quarter of the 19th century, while the other two date to the second quarter of the 20th century. Each of their locations is shown via Geographic Information Systems maps. **(Figures IV 1-4)** Each of these unique sites has a story to tell, but only one of these has been told via oral history interviews, that of Emory Grove. It will be seen by this report that oral history interviews comprise the best possible means of eliciting information on the camp meeting tradition.

The largest of the county's camp meetings, Washington Grove near Gaithersburg, had the good fortune to make the transition from camp meeting to year-round permanent community. This transformation symbolizes the appeal of that particular camp for year-round living and signifies the broader trend, by the turn of the century, of the secularization of camp meetings. Emory Grove, also near Gaithersburg, has a rich, layered history of multiple uses within the greater embrace of the campground, but suffered the great misfortune of being part of an urban renewal project that erased its built environment. The Free Methodist Conference of Virginia and Maryland Camp Meeting at Spencerville, Maryland (hereafter the Spencerville Camp Meeting) is the only site with one, continuous layer of history - that of the Methodist camp meeting. It is also the only camp meeting in Montgomery County that still meets annually. Finally, the Damascus Camp Meeting also had a lengthy unchanged history as a Holiness camp meeting until two years ago, when it was transformed full-time into a working church, the Wesleyan Damascus Church. While the new church owner uses the site and buildings, it is not for a camp meeting, but for regular church services and summer youth camps.

Methodism, at the core of the camp meeting's early popularity, had appeal in Montgomery County for much of its history. In 1788, a Montgomery Methodist Circuit was established. The circuit saw a succession of itinerant preachers, or circuit riders, who spread the Methodist gospel to white and black alike. In 1789, for example, one J. Wilson, a preacher, led services before 648 white members and 103 black members. By the time a preacher named "Draper" was the head of the Montgomery Circuit in 1805, there were 625 white members and 652 black members.¹

It appears that Montgomery County played host to just two known camp meetings in the first phase (1790-1830) of the camp meeting tradition, apparently contemporaneous with great

frontier revivals like Kentucky's Cane Ridge. Although there is no known primary resource material associated with these meetings, secondary references to camp meetings in the County point to places like Hopewell Chapel near Damascus and Federal Chapel in Colesville as having early 19th century camp meetings.²

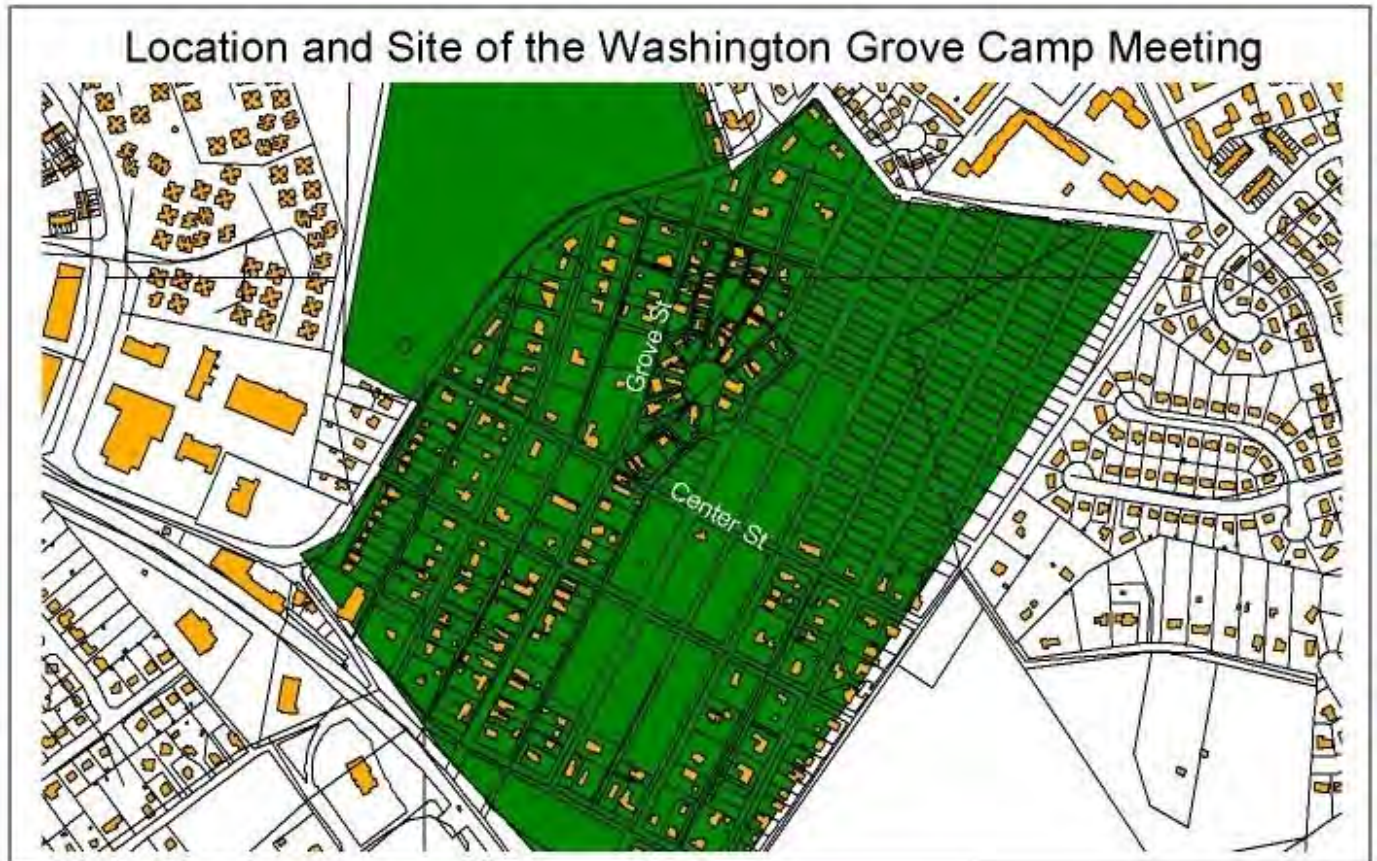


Figure IV-1: The National Register historic district of Washington Grove, Maryland.
(Montgomery County Historic Preservation Section)

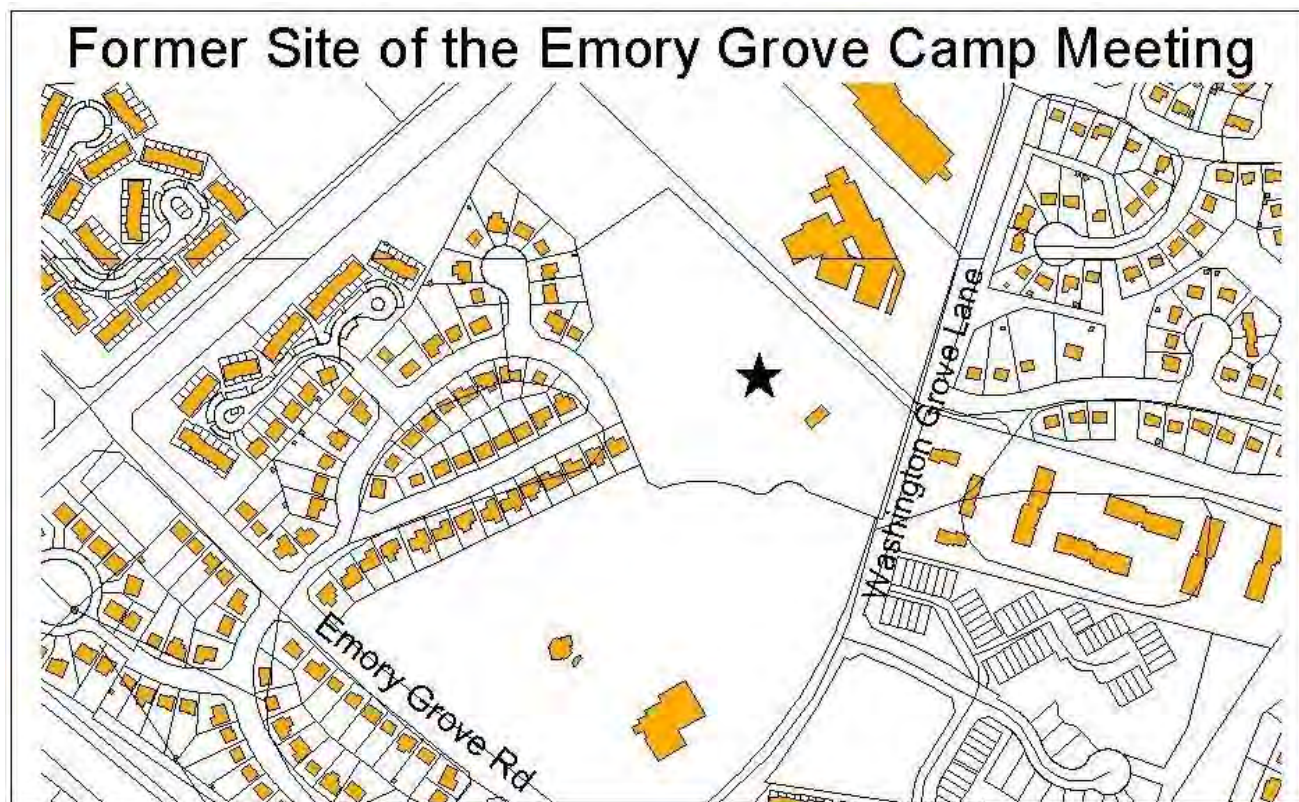


Figure IV-2: The former site of the Emory Grove Camp Meeting, now home to a community center (in the middle, above the Laytonsville Road) and a public park. (Montgomery County Historic Preservation Section)

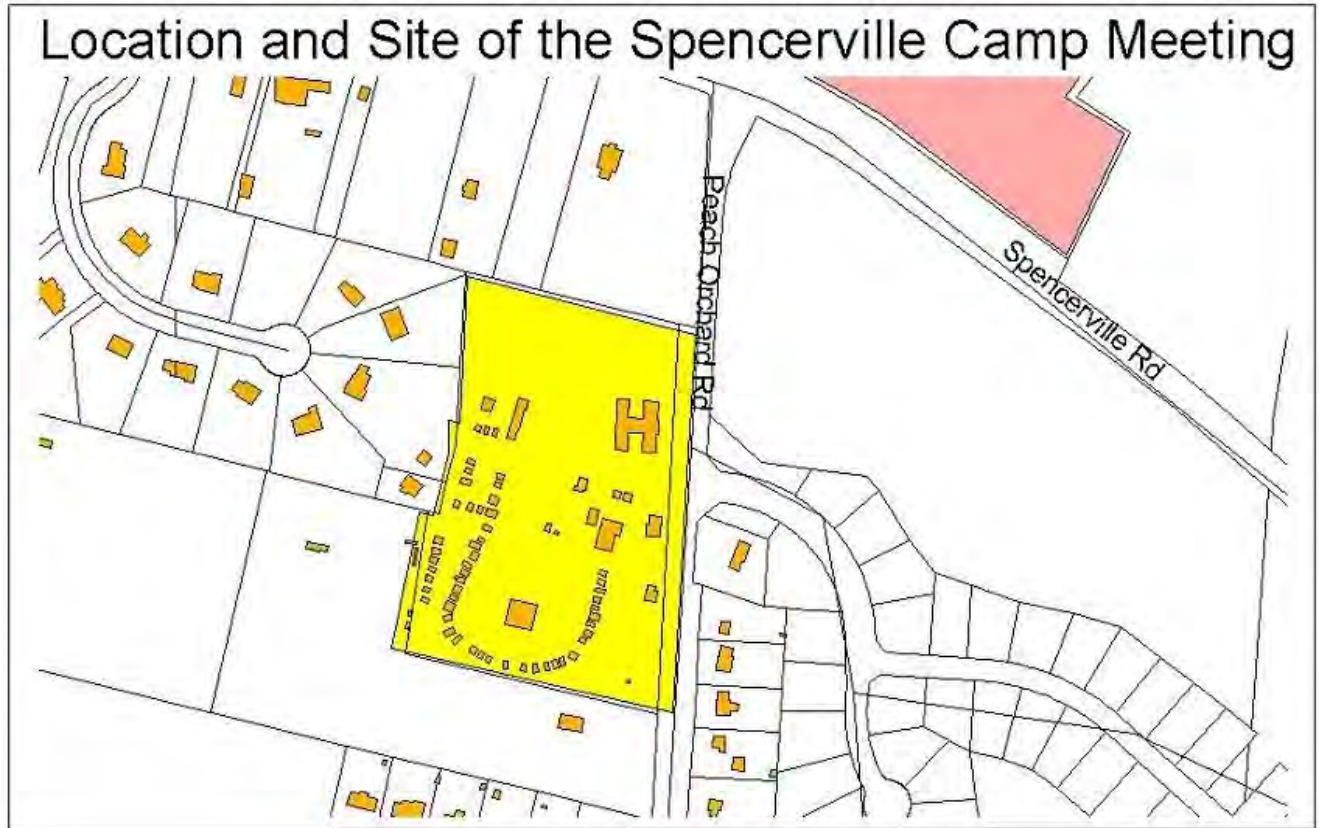


Figure IV-3: The Spencerville Camp Meeting, listed on the Locational Atlas of Historic Sites in Montgomery County, and located to the west of Peach Orchard Road south of the Spencerville Road. The horseshoe-shaped plan of the cottages surrounding the tabernacle is still quite discernible. (Montgomery County Historic Preservation Section)

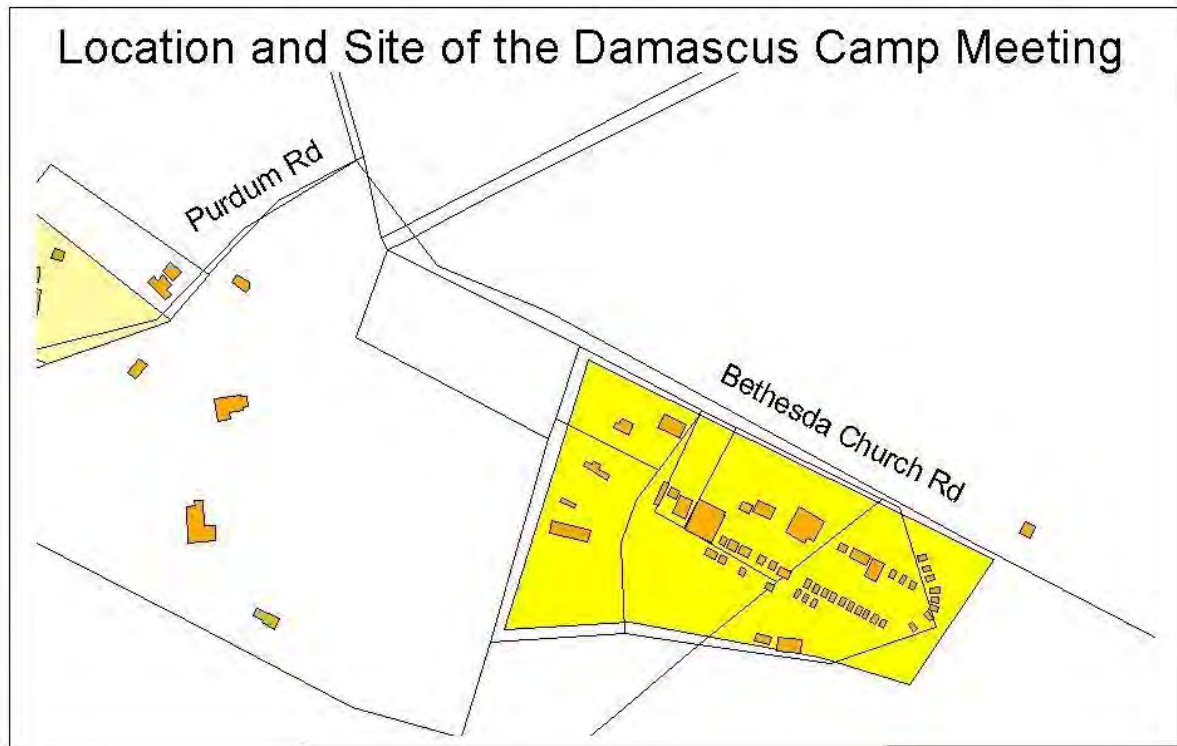


Figure IV-4: The Damascus Camp Meeting, a Montgomery County Locational Atlas site located on the southwest side of the Bethesda Church Road. Its near-horseshoe style layout is also apparent. (Montgomery County Historic Preservation Section)

Circa 1805, the Federal Methodist Episcopal Church, also known as the Federal Chapel Meeting House, was built in Colesville³ and circuit riders are described in 1829 as leading “classes” there. Classes were the basic membership unit in Methodism prior to the Civil War. “A class was a “loosely-knit organization of adults, often centered around an individual. It supposedly met weekly under a leader who was generally a lay person . . . In many cases a class became a church; it might exist 10-15 years before fading away or before becoming a full-fledged station or church with more formal organization. The informal groups met in homes.”⁴ At this time in Colesville, the classes were given at times to whites and, at other times, to African Americans.⁵

By 1866, however, the congregation had affiliated itself with the pro-slavery faction of Methodism, renaming itself Andrew Chapel Methodist Episcopal Church, South. This move was a clear departure from the previous attempts at racial balance. In 1869, the congregation built a new church on Randolph Road. (**Figure IV-5**). Although it is not clear exactly where in Colesville the camp meeting took place, Moncure Daniel Conway, junior preacher who served the Rockville Circuit in 1851, mentioned in his autobiography that he attended a camp meeting that year.⁶

Unfortunately, only one reference to Hopewell Chapel, near Damascus, has been found. It is the general comment from *A Grateful Remembrance* that: The early nineteenth-century camp meeting sites were informal with their brush-arbor pulpits and mourner’s benches. Some of these existed in Montgomery County at Hopewell Chapel near Damascus and Federal Chapel at Colesville.”⁷



Figure IV-5: Andrew Chapel Methodist Church, Colesville (built in 1869), may have been affiliated with an early Montgomery County camp meeting of the Rockville Circuit. (Ned Bayley, *Colesville*, Family Line Publications)

In 1884, during the second phase of camp meeting history (1831-1860), a “Rockville Circuit” had been established as part of the Baltimore Conference. The following stations were part of that Circuit: Friendship, Triadelphia, Brookeville, Emory, Scotts, Rockville, Union, English’s, Goshen, and Sharp Street. There were white preachers and a black exhorter at the founding of the Rockville Circuit and after the first year, the Circuit had preached to 715 whites and 527 blacks. The Quarterly Minutes of the Baltimore Conference indicate that blacks served as local preachers, exhorters, and class leaders, playing an active, but not equal role. They also note that some camp meetings were held along the Rockville Circuit between 1844-1849 and then 1852-1867.⁸ This evidence would indicate that evanescent camp meetings existed in Montgomery County in the second phase of the broader tradition (1831-1860), but the details of these now-extinct meetings are currently unknown.

What is known is that the big boon for camp meetings in Montgomery County occurred in the post-Civil War era, during the third period of camp meeting construction (1861-1919), when two events happened: 1) the railroad made train travel to the countryside possible for Washington urbanites and 2) freedmen began to settle on land sold to them from former masters. Two of Montgomery County’s camp meetings emerged in the Reconstruction era: Washington Grove and Emory Grove. Washington Grove was begun by Methodists from several congregations in Washington, D.C. while Emory Grove was affiliated with the Emory Grove United Methodist Church.

Spencerville and Damascus, the other two sizeable camp meetings, originated during the Great Depression, undoubtedly as an antidote to the economic ills of the time. They represent the fourth and final phase of the camp meeting tradition, when religious revivals were renewed in certain places across the country. In 1936, there were 49 Methodist churches in the county, 29 belonging to the Methodist Episcopal strain and 20 belonging to the Methodist Episcopal, South faction. The Spencerville Camp Meeting is not tied, per se, to a church, but has always been a Free Methodist camp meeting with strong membership from the Spencerville Free Methodist Church. The Damascus Camp Meeting was tied to the Bethesda Methodist Church but has, since early on, participated in the Interdenominational Holiness tradition.

In addition to these lasting, full-fledged camp meetings, there were other “tent meetings” or quasi-camp meetings throughout the county that have vanished completely. They are mentioned in *The Sentinel*, a highly political newspaper that ran in the first half of the 19th century and is still published today. Despite its flagrant editorializing-as-news style, the newspaper is a valuable asset in learning about the location and timing of the various camp meetings. The August 29, 1879 issue of *The Sentinel*, for example, reported of a shooting at the “colored Camp meeting on Sunday, near Norbeck.”⁹ The *Sentinel* spent plenty of time recording the misdeeds of the African-American community, even at one point recommending a lynching.¹⁰ Such outright

racism was described in *Washington Grove: 1873-1937*: “In Montgomery County, in a state neither liberal enough to be northern nor courageous enough to be southern, the dominant and unabashedly Democratic *Sentinel* constantly kept the population in fear of Negro crime or revolt, reporting one-sidedly all the most bizarre incidents, real or rumored, of the Reconstruction era.”¹¹

Other *Sentinel* noticing pointed to the prevalence of tent gatherings and church picnics in general in Montgomery County’s history. The July 8, 1880 issue of *The Sentinel* noted that the “Wesley Grove Camp Meeting Association,” somewhere near Baltimore, had cleared its debts.¹² A mention of a “tent meeting” in the August 10, 1933 issue of *The Sentinel* focused on the “Annual Tent Meeting at Clarksburg, to be held August 9-27.” It reported that “the annual tent meeting, held under the direction of Rev. Fred R. Barns, pastor of the M.E. Churches at Hyattstown, Browningsville and Clarksburg, is scheduled to be held from August 9th to 27th. There will be a meeting each evening and beginning on August 15th morning services will be held at 10 o’clock A.M.”¹³

The four, best attended and longest lasting camp meetings in the county are described in greater detail below.

WASHINGTON GROVE

The first camp meeting of any size in Montgomery County was, without a doubt, Washington Grove, a post-Civil War phenomenon created as the desire for spiritual fulfillment converged with the possibility of rail travel. The Washington, D.C. Methodist communities sought to have a camp meeting of their own in 1872. The goal was to control the use of liquor on the premises and keep out the rowdier elements of society. With the opening in 1873 of the Metropolitan Branch of the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad (B&O), the Methodists had a variety of sites from which to choose. They settled on a piece of land owned by Mrs. Cook near Gaithersburg, accessibly by the Washington Grove railroad station, one of the original stops on the newly opened B&O line. **(Figure IV-6)** The land was “suitable for the purposes contemplated because of its elevation, its natural drainage, its springs and the abundance of woods, and especially for the reason that it could be located on the new Railroad.”¹⁴ The Association purchased a tract of 268 acres located between Rockville and Gaithersburg.

The Washington Grove Camp Meeting Association was officially created in 1873, with officers elected from various Methodist churches in the District and Maryland, and stock shares promoted as the primary fiscal tool for growth. Despite its District of Columbia origins, the bylaws of the Association decreed that a majority of camp meeting members had be citizens of Maryland and of the Methodist persuasion. This outreach would eventually be achieved, but not without initial stumbling. (See below.)

The first preachers were affiliated with the Washington District, but lay preachers also were welcomed to exhort. Eventually, evangelists descended upon the camp from Baltimore, Philadelphia, even as far away as New York. The main goal was the conversion of sinners, as all people who came to Washington Grove were viewed as sinners who must publicly confess to be converted. Once people had converted, they were urged to affiliate with a church closer to

home, if they did not already belong to one. Church revivals were thereafter established to keep up the camp meeting spirit once the Washington Grove season ended.

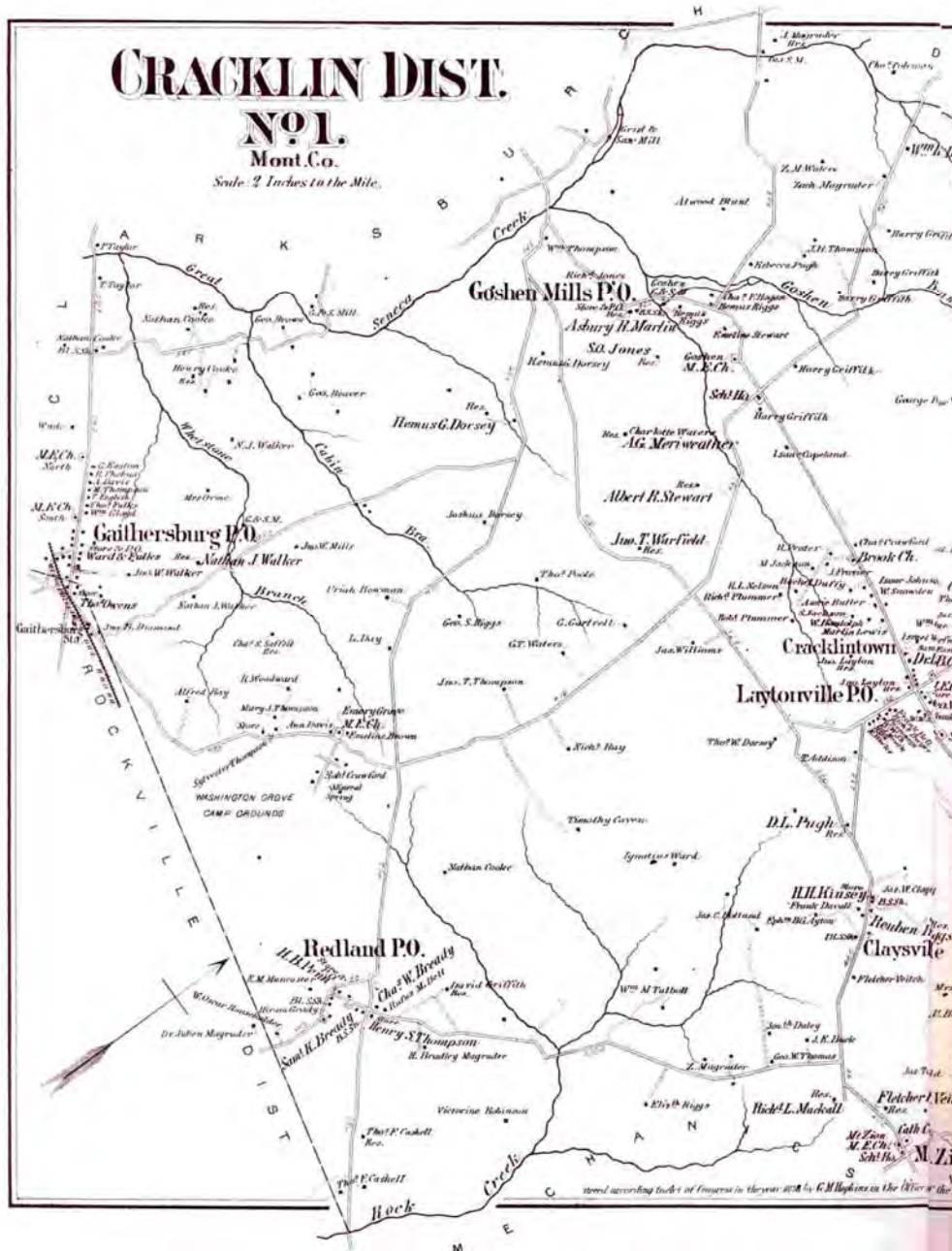


Figure IV-6: Map showing Cracklin District, No. 1 in Montgomery County, 1879, with line of railroad tracks at left. The Washington Grove and Emory Grove camp meeting sites are located to the south and north respectively of the Laytonsville Rd. (*Hopkins Atlas of 1879*)

Even prior to the official inauguration of Washington Grove, a picnic was held in 1872 to consecrate the grounds. Two-hundred and fifty families pitched tents there in a circular formation. Simple backless benches were arranged for the congregants during the prayer meetings. The first ‘official’ camp opened on Wednesday, August 13, 1873 and ran for ten days. *The Sentinel* reported that it rained the entire time – and that campgoers got drenched. The people that filled the 150 tents pitched in 1873 didn’t seem the worse for wear. Fires were lit at the corners of the Plaza in order to counteract the chilling rain. By the following Sunday, when the sun came out, *The Sentinel* estimated that 5,000 to 8,000 people had attended, many of them traveling to the campground for that particular day.

By the end of the first camp meeting, the success of the venture could be measured by the number of stock shares pledged. Owning stock in the Association meant that one was on his way to owning a lot there. With ownership, one could pitch a tent, or, eventually, build a cottage at Washington Grove. The Association charged a ground rent to those who wanted to do so. Tents themselves could be rented from the Association for a small cost. While most visitors to the campground did pitch tents, the Association also constructed a hotel, assembly hall, and started the cottage-building process within a year of its opening. (See Architecture section below.) There were over 140 new shares pledged at the first camp, which, when added to the 500 already pledged by the group’s organizers, equated to \$10,000 in capital funds. Two-thousand shares of stock equaled \$20 in cash.

In that second year of camp meeting, nearly 10,000 people came to pray, sing, and commune. Services had been put in place to make the experience less rustic. People who came by horse and/or carriage could board their animals at a pen made available by a local farmer. Those that arrived by train could purchase perishables from a market and buy or rent items for their tents: cots, mattresses and wooden boards for flooring or bunks and straw for a softer floor. The Association also offered, for a small fee, carrying services. Visitors also could stop in at a barber shop or confectioner. If they didn’t have a tent, they could elect to stay in one of two boarding tents and also take their meals there, even if not lodging there. (Many families chose, however, to cook their own meals.). The Association also had provided for two large tents to be used for religious and/or organizational meetings. Any outside vendors paid the Washington Grove Camp Meeting Association a fee.

The Association started to branch out from its Washington, D.C. base, seeking new converts in the people from the immediate surroundings of Washington Grove as well as from a broader rural base, but there was stumbling along the way. The campgoers were still primarily “city folk,” traveling by their own carriage or train from Washington, D.C. The August 20, 1875 issue of *The Sentinel* noted the problem:

The Camp was in many respects a failure. Our people from the county manifested little or no interest in it during its progress, notwithstanding its

accessibility, being located in the very heart of Montgomery County. An idea has gone forth, unfounded we hope, that the *country* people were not welcome to participate with their brethren from the city in their religious festivities on such terms of equality as they would alone accept.¹⁵

Within two years, the Grove's advertisement in *The Sentinel* sought to correct the perception:

Resolved, That we extend to them [the citizens of Montgomery County] a cordial invitation to come and camp with us in succeeding years, promising that no effort shall be spared on our part to unite in friendship and brotherly love those who, being such near neighbors, should know and appreciate each other."¹⁶

Camaraderie was critical in such tight quarters. A circular layout of the grounds was initiated early on showing dense tent lots. The core was lit by coal-oil lamps and corner torches. **(Figure IV-7)** The services in the center were led by a preacher who stood upon a stand with a choir arrayed behind. Straw was laid in front of the stand forming an altar of sorts, so that people could come down to the "mourner's bench" for salvation. All of the initial prayer meetings took place outside, except during inclement weather, when the campgoers would gather inside a large tent at the edge of the grove.

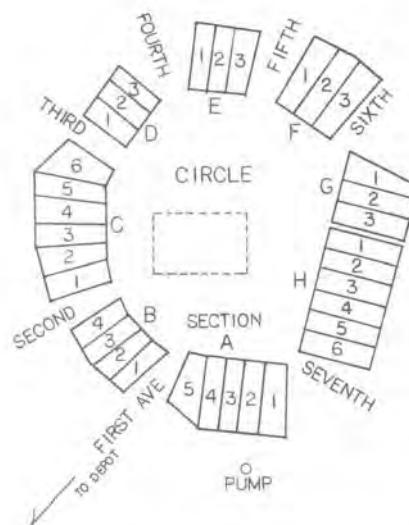


Figure IV-7: Sketch of the first layout of tents around the circle at Washington Grove from the mid-1870s. (Philip K. Edwards, *Washington Grove: 1873-1937*)

By 1879, the Sunday camp meeting services were drawing at least 8,000 attendees, who worshipped under a tabernacle built in 1877. It was at this time that the transition from a discrete summer event to a lengthier stay began to emerge as a possibility for campgoers. The reason for the transformation was the perception of greater healthfulness afforded by the countryside when compared to that of Washington, D.C. The higher elevation, abundance of trees, sources of

water, openness of the ground, etc. gave people the distinct feeling that Washington Grove was a healthier place to be than in the muggy summertime city. Campgoers drew out their stays, arriving before Camp Meeting started and leaving after it ended.

By the late 1870s, tents seemed inconvenient for such a long stay and the idea for more permanent cottages seemed logical. The Board of Trustees began leasing cottage sites for \$6 in ground rent. By 1880, *The Sentinel* reported that “twenty families are now occupying cottages there [at Washington Grove] and are having quite a pleasant time of it.”¹⁷ The B&O allowed Grove residents to send building materials up the line free of charge and gave citizens of the Grove a regular pass for train travel. Certainly, the role that the B&O Railroad played in advancing the camp meeting nationwide and, in Montgomery County, was significant. The relationship between the Washington Grove Association and the B&O remained mutually beneficial for many years, but not without question. **(Figures IV-8 and IV-9)**

As people built permanent cottages, the question of whether Washington Grove was a religious encampment or a summer resort surfaced. One particular manifestation of this question played out in the philosophical underpinnings of what constituted a proper Sabbath. Special “excursion” train fares established on the Metropolitan Branch were designed to promote train travel and generated great crowds for the Washington Grove station. As described in *Washington Grove*, the community’s published history: “If a person were to drive to camp meeting on a Sunday in the family buggy, he would not break the Sabbath, nor would he if he bought a ticket on a regularly scheduled train. But if he were to buy a ticket on an *excursion* train serving only the camp meeting, the railroad would be profiteering and therefore breaking the Sabbath. For the Grove this was no small problem since most of the thousands who came to camp each Sunday came by train.”¹⁸ The August 8, 1873 issue of *The Sentinel* reported on the matter:

It was said it was not the intention of the camp meeting association to make stipulations with outside parties as to the methods of conducting their camp meeting affairs. It was also stated that arrangements of the camp meeting committee with the railroad company provides that the company will not run any *excursion* trains on the Sabbath unless specially requested to do so by the camp meeting committee.”¹⁹

While it was problematic enough for the Association to consider the train’s breaking of the Sabbath, it became a public embarrassment when it was discovered that the B&O was giving the Association a rebate on its Sunday excursion tickets.

The train was unequivocally pivotal to the Grove’s success, however. The August 27, 1880 issue of *The Sentinel* reported: “As the various trains approached the depot the iron-horse seemed jaded and tired with his burden of humanity. All nationalities and grades, all classes and all creeds seemed to be fully and largely represented. From far and near the great crowd poured into this wooded place of worship . . .”²⁰ What brought them was not only the elevated, shady spot, but the quality of its ministering. That same newspaper issue extolled the sermon of one Reverend Dr. Guard, saying: “In metaphysics it was profound, in conception it was faultlessly grand, whilst its proportions were artistic and classic, adorned with flowers of imagery that were superlatively beautiful.”²¹

Despite the proximity of Washington Grove to Emory Grove, the black camp meeting just up the Laytonsville Road, there was no connection between the two camps. The connection came via shared transportation needs and the need for employment. Emory Grove residents got off the train at the Washington Grove station along with Washington Grove residents. Emory Grove residents also were employed by Washington Grove people as groundskeepers, housekeepers, and cottage builders. But the Washington Grove camp meeting itself was strictly a white affair. An 1873 ad in *The Sentinel* quoted the resolution of the presiding elder of Washington Grove, inviting only the ministry and laity of the “Methodist Episcopal Church South and the Methodist Protestant Church” to join with him at the camp meeting, thereby excluding abolitionists or African-Americans.

In the 1870s and 1880s, Washington Grove employed a black cottage builder and superintendent, named W.A. Scott, who did live on the grounds. But as segregation became the official policy of the nation in the 1890s, distrust of Scott and prejudice against blacks resulted in his ouster in favor of a white superintendent. In 1897, the gates of Washington Grove were even closed during the days of the Emory Grove Camp Meeting, reportedly based in part on a burglary of several cottages a few years earlier by an Emory Grove resident.

Washington Grove was a highly insular community. From the beginning it fought a constant battle, as did most camp meetings, to keep out what it called the “rowdier” elements of society – most prominently those that drank and gambled. The August 20, 1875 issue of *The Sentinel* once again highlighted the city/country division in the greater Washington area, with the paper defending its own turf on the issue of who disrupted one of Washington Grove’s camp meetings: “On Monday night last the religious experience meetings were prolonged into the late hours of the night, and it is said by our contemporary, the *National Republican*, that there was considerable rowdys on the grounds and that the roughs came from Rockville and Laytonsville. We hurl this foul slander back in its teeth and are forced for the sake of the truth to say that the only disorder we perceived at the Camp was perpetrated by Washington bullies.”²²



Figure IV-8: The old (on left) and new (on right) stations of the B&O Railroad’s Washington Grove stop in the late 19th century. (Edwards, *Washington Grove, 1873-1937*)



Figure IV-9: People in front of the second Washington Grove B&O Station. (Edwards, *Washington Grove, 1873-1937*)

In a later effort to retain the community's moral high ground, the Association made revisions to its bylaws in May of 1906. The words "camp meeting" were dropped from the Association's title, reflecting that the "camp" was no longer the Association's primary function. The camp meeting was rolled into the new Chautauqua program, a nationwide movement of Sunday School instruction melded with cultural programs. This shift in emphasis signaled the beginning of profound changes for the former camp meeting. More and more people chose to build year-round cottages at Washington Grove. **(Figures IV-10 and IV-11)**

Gradually, residential and recreational interests prevailed over religious ones and the children of the oldest residents began moving outside of the Grove. Recreation had been a part of the camp for a long time, with "young men from Washington Grove Camp" fielding a baseball team at least by 1879.²³ Groups of lots were held out for recreational fields. **(Figure IV-12)** But the 20th-century interests in pursuits other than religion were starting to be problematic for the camp meeting tradition. Attendance at camp diminished, making the summer population smaller than it had been in decades past. World War I had the effect of making the Grove a distinct entity apart from Washington, D.C., rather than a quasi-rural retreat from it. The capital had become a center of world commerce surrounded by a plethora of places to live. The breadth of the metropolitan community coupled with the lack of availability of Washington Grove stock shares made the Grove a less desirable place to locate.

Despite the population decline, the camp meeting carried on as best it could. In 1920 and 1921, the services at camp were led by Dr. John E. Fort of Elderbrooke Methodist Church on River Road in the District of Columbia. The following year, Dr. Osborn of Washington Grove's own church led a smaller camp meeting. The final camp was led by evangelist Dr. William B. Waters

of Montgomery County. According to some, Washington Grove had its final camp meeting season in August 1924, but several more meetings (of dwindling revenue) under the auspices of a Camp Meeting Institute ensued until finally, in 1928, the Grove saw its very last meeting.



Figure IV-10: Original cottages around the original open tabernacle. (Edwards, *Washington Grove, 1873-1937*)



Figure IV-11: One of the permanent cottages built circa 1875-80 and remodeled c. 1890. (Montgomery County Historic Preservation Section)

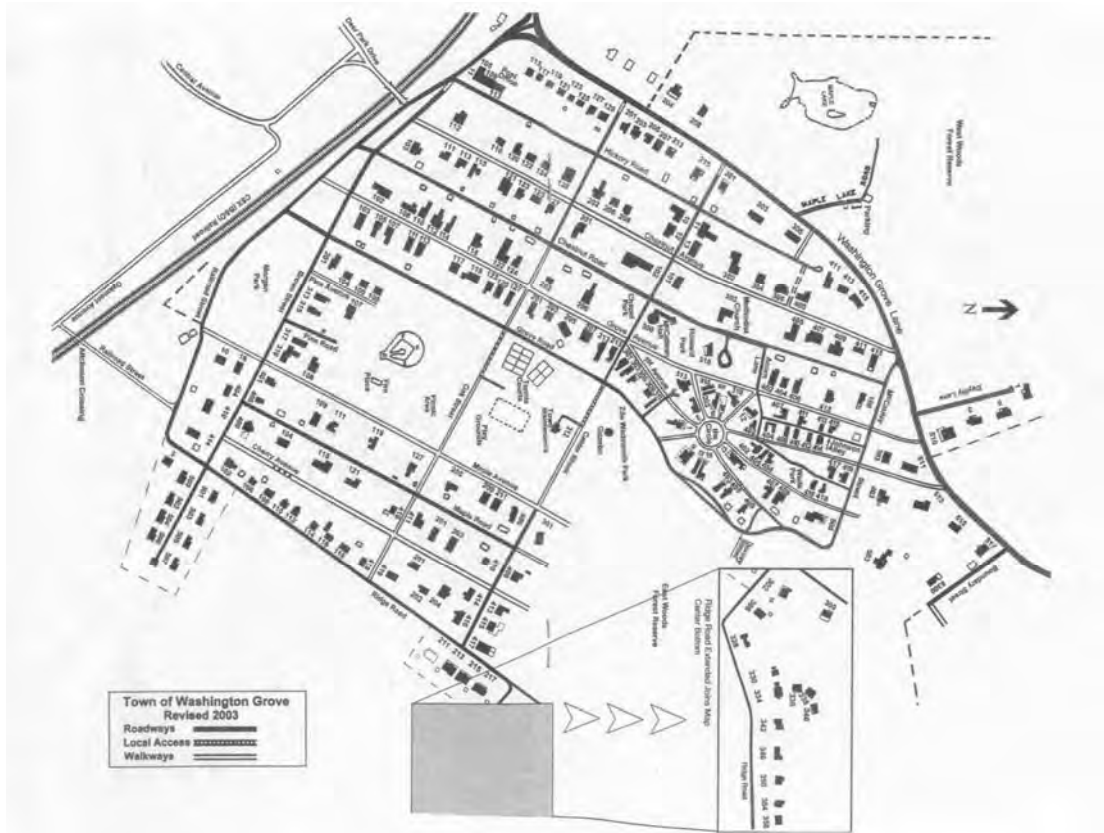


Figure IV-12: Map of the Town of Washington Grove from 2003 showing how the central blocks were not developed with housing but merged for recreation. (Town Directory, 2003)

In the 1910s and 1920s, the Grove became increasingly like a municipality, with water, light, and sewer improvements some of the largest indicators of this change in status. Part of the sewer engineering system was designed by a Professor Freeman, a professional engineer who had laid out the town of Garrett Park, also in Montgomery County. Despite Freeman's degree, the first sewer system was flawed by as early as 1913. Thereon in, the sewer system was corrected in phases.

Washington Grove also set about putting its religious affairs in order once its core – the camp meeting tradition – began to dissolve. The town was given a regular appointment within the Baltimore Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church and a permanent pastor's house was built on church grounds in 1926. Wording in a 1929 resolution at the Association's annual meeting reflected the desire to end camp meetings, which had lost sight of its origins and

somehow degenerated into a “source of embarrassment both to the Association and to the local church.”²⁴ In 1937, the town was incorporated and the first mayor, town council and planning commission were established. Now listed on the National Register of Historic Places, the town of Washington Grove is an excellent representation of the cultural, landscape, and architectural significance of the Methodist camp meeting.

EMORY GROVE

Whereas Washington Grove began as a camp meeting and evolved into a year-round town, Emory Grove was, from its inception, a year-round community that boasted an annual camp meeting. Another contrast is that the Emory Grove Camp Meeting was started by its own community inhabitants whereas the Washington Grove Camp Meeting was initiated by city dwellers from Washington.

The most poignant of the camp meeting sagas, Emory Grove’s history is a story not just of a camp meeting, but also of an entire community that is no longer physically intact. It was an African-American community and camp meeting located just northeast of Gaithersburg proper, close by but entirely separate from Washington Grove, its white camp-meeting counterpart. The name “Emory Grove” is not to be confused with the ‘white’ campground of the same name located in Glyndon, Maryland, closer to the Baltimore community.²⁵ Both campgrounds were named after John Emory, who served as bishop of the Methodist Conference in the early 1800s.

Montgomery County’s Emory Grove was founded by freed slaves from the Redland and Goshen areas who purchased land from the Woodward, Bowman, Cooke, and Talbott families between the years 1864-1870. The early settlers of the community were named Chambers, Davis, Harris, Luckett, Taylor, Tyler, Braxton, Duvall, and Lancaster.²⁶ The initial land accumulation totaled about 123 acres, but grew with time to 300 acres.

By 1871, the Washington Conference of Methodists held a mission at the home of Robert Taylor in the emerging Emory Grove community.²⁷ At approximately the same time, community leaders built a log-hewn church at the corner of Emory Grove Road and the Laytonsville Road, calling it the Emory Grove Methodist Episcopal Church. The land for the church was sold by Rozell Woodward to William Chambers, John W. Dorsey, Jeffrey Maccabee, and John Waters, but the deed was not actually signed until March 16, 1878. **(Figure IV-13)** By September 17, 1879, *The Sentinel* would report that a Quarterly Meeting was held at “Emory” Saturday and Sunday. Whether or not this was a reference to Emory Grove is unclear.²⁸



Figure IV-13: Early trustees of the Emory Grove Church. (Thelma Scott, Emory Grove resident) From left to right Nathan Duvall, Isaiah Taylor, Frankie Duvall, and Ruize Tyler.

The Emory Grove Camp Meeting

The spiritual strength of Montgomery County's black communities was noted in "The Black Oral History Study of Northeastern Montgomery County" (August 1983):

The common element in the development pattern [of black communities in Montgomery County] was initiation of community ties prior to actual settlement. The presence of significant Methodist and Quaker populations encouraged Blacks to engage in religious activities and cultivate healthy family relationships. As a result, Blacks began to attend their own church services or those of Anglo churches prior to 1865. Slaves from various farms were allowed to come together to worship, and in effect, establish religious communities. These assumed the posture of extended, but dispersed communities. When freedom came in 1865, the Black religious community was usually the first to reassemble as a recognized entity.²⁹

The Emory Grove Camp Meeting was the lifeblood of the community and one of the most eagerly anticipated events of the African-American Methodist community throughout Montgomery County. Besides those that camped at the meeting, by the late 1880s, city dwellers came by train to the meeting for the day getting off at the Washington Grove station and walking the rather long stretch of Washington Grove Road to reach the Emory Grove camp meeting. **(Figures IV-14 and 15)** The Emory Grove Camp Meeting began informally, supposedly in the 1860s, when slave owners allowed their slaves to worship together on Sundays in a local grove of trees. A Sandy Spring slave named James Wesley Hill, known as “Canada Jim,” is said to have visited local camp meetings to recruit slaves to flee on the Underground Railroad to Canada, possibly visiting Emory Grove.³⁰ Although there is no primary documentation of his connection to Emory Grove, it has long been oral tradition that Emory Grove belonged to his circuit. If so, it would make the Emory Grove camp meeting one of the longest camp meeting traditions nationally, given that it stayed open until 1967, over 100 years later.

The Emory Grove Camp Meeting was held on land that was known by different names over time: Bowman’s Woods, the Plummer Farm, Mrs. Hamilton’s Grove, and Mineral Grove. The grove of oak trees on the north side of Laytonsville Road, east of Washington Grove, was actually called “the Mineral Grove Camp Grounds,” in an advertisement of 1950 and was named thus after the association that formed it, the Mineral Grove Club of Montgomery County. **(Figure IV-16)** Club members included: Francis Ricks, Charles E. Ross, William Luster, William Hawkins, Frank Duvall, and Washington Ricks. Today, a smaller cluster of the great oaks still remain, and the land that was the campground is preserved as part of Johnson’s Park, named after the mid-20th century owner, Edward Johnson. **(Figure IV-17)**

The exact date of the first camp meeting is not known. According to Washington Grove historians, the Emory Grove Camp Meeting’s schedule was set in advance of Washington Grove’s in 1875, perhaps not to overburden the train or simply not to have the two camps in attendance at the same time. Their published camp history notes that a land dispute that occurred 1876 and 1879 prevented the Emory Grove Camp Meeting from being held.³¹ Emory Grove community members and historians recall the camp founding differently, and have written a manuscript on the founding of the camp meeting that indicates it was definitely in place by 1877.³²

Everyone agrees that the Emory Grove Camp Meeting was up and running full-force by 1880. It was advertised in the July 9, 1880 issue of *The Sentinel* as the following: “The Rockville Camp Meeting, of the Washington Conference, colored, will commence in Mrs. Hamilton’s grove, on Saturday, July 31st and will continue until Monday, August 9th.”³³ Two weeks later, the paper featured an advertisement for the camp meeting. **(Figure IV-18)** The ad itself did not specify that it was a “black” camp meeting, however, and apparently *The Sentinel* felt the need to clarify by writing:

By reference to another column of to-days issue it will be seen that the colored branch of the M.E. Church will hold a Camp Meeting at Mrs. Hamilton’s Grove, one mile north of Washington Grove, this county, commencing Saturday, July 31st, and ending Monday, August 9th. Special rates by the railroad and the splendid grounds will no doubt induce many to attend.³⁴



Figures IV-14 and IV-15: Participants of the Emory Grove Camp Meeting walking to the site from the Washington Grove B&O station. (*Washington Grove, 1873-1937*)

The Fifty - Ninth Annual Union

CAMP MEETING

EMORY GROVE - NEAR GAITHERSBURG, MD.

AUGUST 13, 20 & 27, 1950

The Methodist Church, Wash. District
AT THE MINERAL GROVE CAMP GROUNDS

Order of Services

SUNDAY AUGUST 18th
10:00 A.M. Church School E. U. Taylor, Superintendent
3 P.M. Sermon by Rev. T. H. Reed
Brook Grove Charge
Accompanied by Choir and Prof. C. E. Ross' Sacred Band

SUNDAY AUGUST 20th
10:00 A.M. Church School
11:00 A.M. Sermon by Rev. Moses Prather
3:00 P.M. Sermon by Rev. Richard H. Johnson
District Superintendent
8 P.M. Sermon by Rev. Edwin Prather
Accompanied by the male Chorus of Laytonsville and Stewardtown
Admission Free

SUNDAY AUGUST 27th
10:00 A.M. Church School
11:00 A.M. Sermon by Rev. I. H. Gray
Accompanied by Choir
3:00 P.M. Sermon by Rev. J. J. Barnes
of Baltimore, Md.
8 P.M. Sermon by Rev. Wm. H. Tyler

All Sister Churches, Singing Bands and Pastors are Invited.

COMMITTEE of ARRANGEMENTS

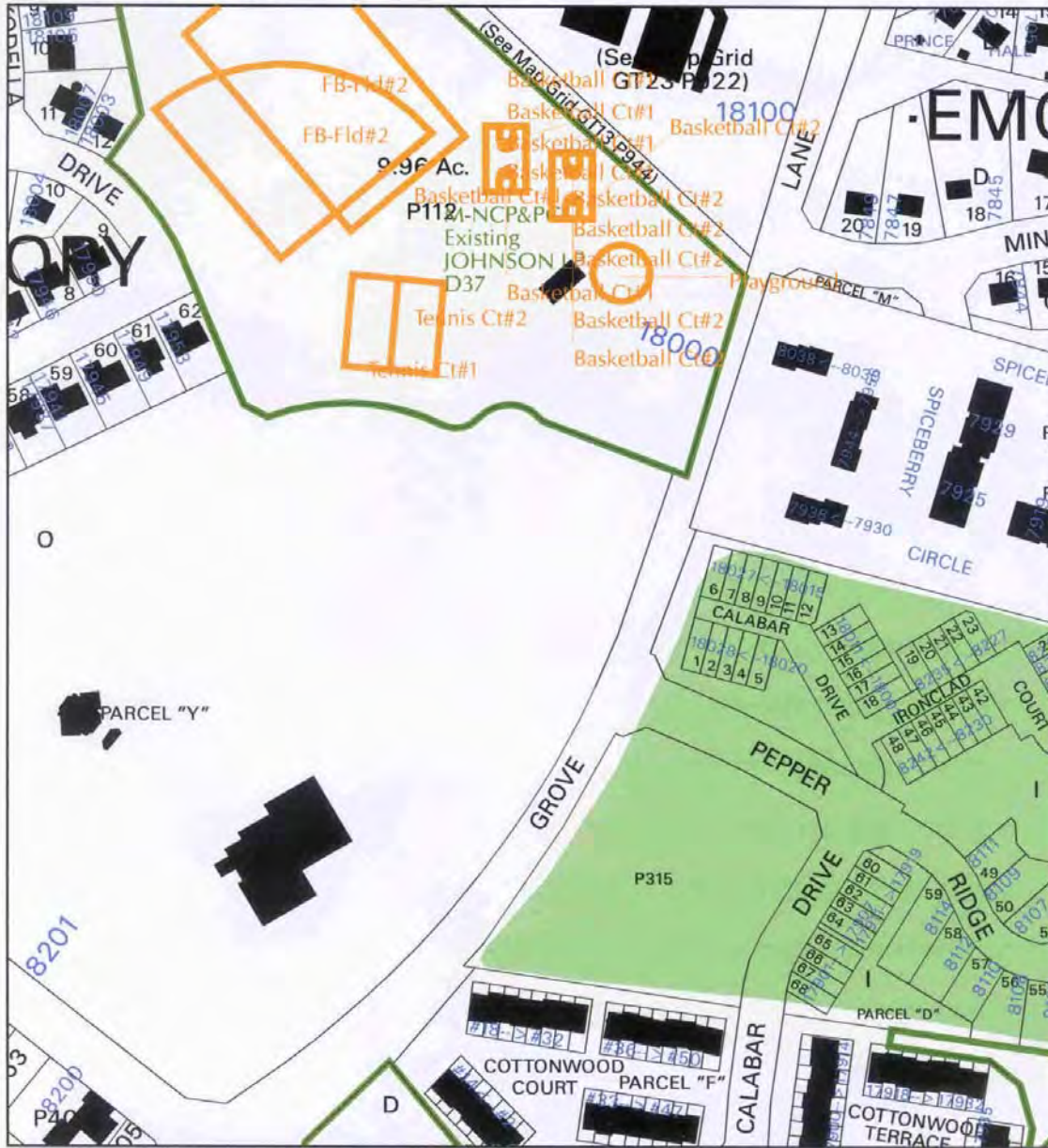
Edward Johnson	William Ridgley
Nathan Duvall	Samuel Hollman
Frank Duvall	Pearl B. Green
Sarah Braxton	Ruize Tyler
John Braxton	Eather Myles
Henry Braxton	
Rev. Joseph Stemley, Pastor	Rev. R. H. Johnson, Dist. Supt.

Admission Adults 25c - Children 10c

THE HEBRON PRESS — 11 W. Wood Lane, Rockville, Md.

Figure IV-16: 1950 advertisement for the Emory Grove Camp Meeting.
(Montgomery County Historical Society)

EMORY GROVE



Map compiled on March 17, 2004 at 2:11 PM | Site located on base sheet no - 224NW08

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MONTGOMERY COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF PARK AND PLANNING



Figure IV-17: Map of the site of the former Emory Grove Camp Meeting. Camp was held where basketball and tennis courts now make up part of Johnson's Park, on the northwest side of Washington Grove Lane, formerly part of Route 124 or the Laytonsville Road. (Montgomery County Department of Park and Planning)

THE GREAT CAMP MEETING!

The Rockville Camp Meeting
 Of the Washington Annual Conference of the
 M. E. Church, Washington District, will be-
 gin in Mrs. Hamilton's Grove, this Montgom-
 ery county,

On Saturday, July 31st,
 1880, and continue until Monday August 9th.

SPECIAL RATES

From all stations on the Metropolitan Branch
 of the B. & O. R. R., to and from Washing-
 ton Grove Station.

This Grove is beautifully located one mile
 North of Washington Grove; it is well wa-
 tered and shaded. Persons coming by way of
 the above named road will leave the cars at
 Washington Grove Station.

N. C. BROWN, Pastor.
 W. C. COOPER, P. E.

ky23-21

Figure IV-18: *The Sentinel* featured this ad on the Emory Grove Camp Meeting, calling it the Rockville Camp Meeting. By means of another column in the same paper, the news organization made sure its readers knew it was a “colored” camp meeting. (Montgomery County Public Library, Rockville Branch)

The camp meeting's official charter was drawn up in 1881.³⁵ The Emory Grove camp meeting was known far and wide and played a huge role in annually cementing the ties between black families and friends dispersed throughout the county. People came to the meeting from Washington, Baltimore, Philadelphia, West Virginia, Virginia, New York and even Boston (where some Emory Grove families had moved). Locally, people came from Spencerville, Norbeck, Sandy Spring, Holly Grove, Jerusalem, Tobytown, Poolesville, and even Howard County.

As stated in *The Sentinel* ad of 1880, the early Emory Grove camp meetings were an extended affair, running for ten days, and operating as a tent-style camp meeting. The earliest visitors, some of whom came from far away, pitched tents that were described to younger generations. Although no pictures remain of the Emory Grove tent meetings, Richard Tyler, an oral history interviewee, drew what those tents looked like based on years of hearing stories told by his parents and others (**Figure IV-19**) The tents were typical canvas structures placed in the ground with wooden stakes. The front flaps were left open for entry.

Unlike the white camp meetings in Montgomery County, however, the canvas tent was never replaced with the more permanent "cottages." And, at an unknown date in the 20th century, the Emory Grove Camp Meeting stopped meeting for consecutive days and met only for the last three Sundays in August. (The last three Sundays in August pattern continued until the camp's closure in 1967.)

At some point either in the late 19th century or during the first half of the 20th century, "tables" began to appear, first contemporaneously and then as a substitute for the tents. Tables were homemade structures that provided both shelter from inclement weather and a place to prepare and dispense food. A plausible reason for a lack of permanent cottages at Emory Grove is that Emory Grove's camp meetings had changed from a continuous event to an event that took place only on the last three Sundays of August. In addition, the low income of many of the Emory Grove campgoers undoubtedly contributed to an inability to afford a second, summer cottage, no matter how simple.

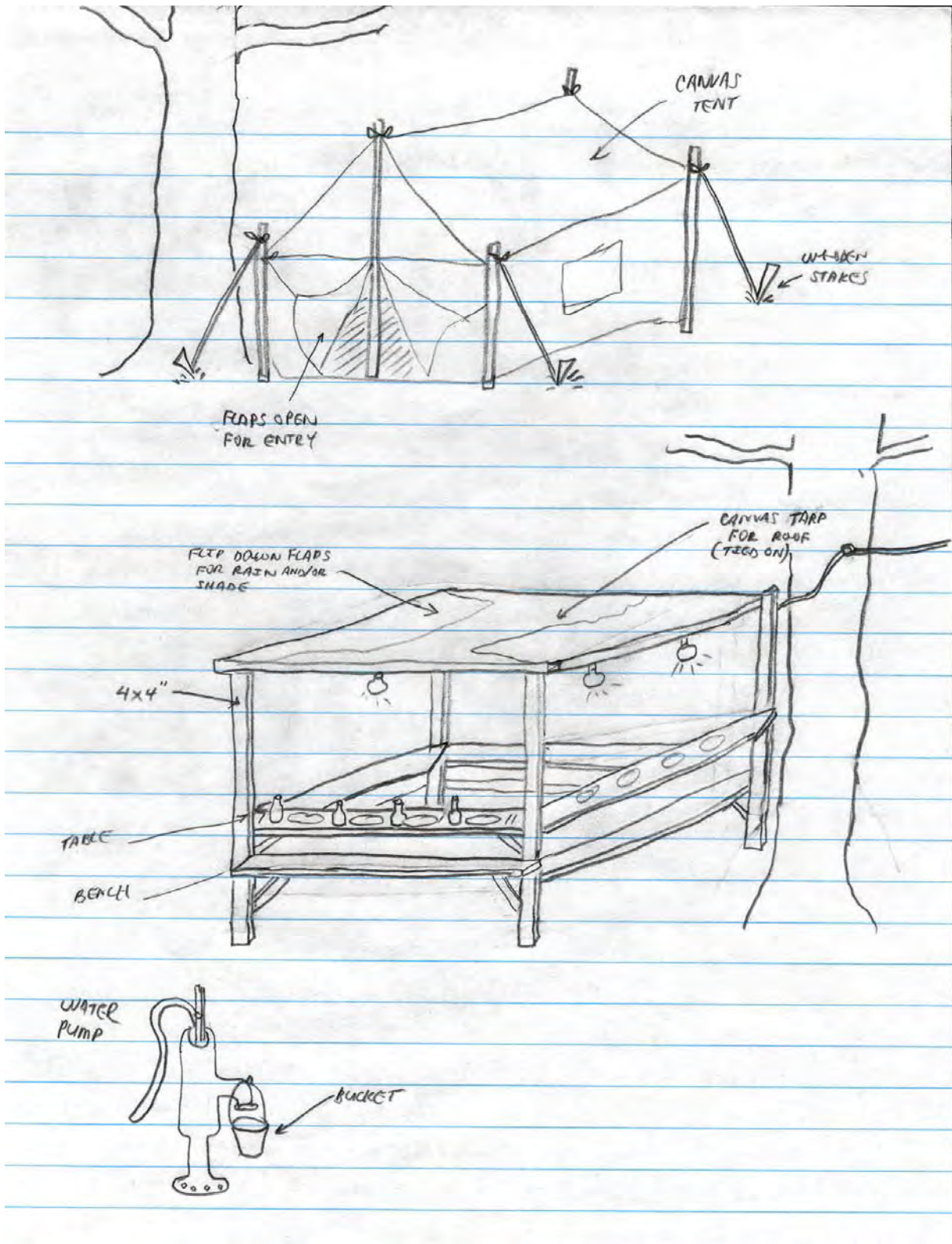


Figure IV-19: Sketches of a typical tent, “table,” and the camp meeting water pump courtesy of Richard Tyler.

Although ubiquitous at Emory Grove, these “tables” are not known to have existed at other campgrounds. They appear to represent a folk vernacular form specific to Emory Grove. According to Emory Grove’s own typed manuscript history, taken primarily from the recollections of Mrs. Maude Taylor:

The early camp meetings were held in Bowman’s woods, which in later years became property of Robert Plummer. Later, on the Mineral Grove grounds, with the camp well established, this time always suggested to certain families that the season had come for them to take up ‘bag and baggage’ and move to the woods. Some families, far removed from their homes, could be seen leading or driving certain of their stock on their way to camp. The grounds were bedecked with tents housing the families and their possessions. The stock, for the most part, grazed on the ‘commons.’ On each of the three Sundays of camp, lines of horse-drawn vehicles and numerous persons afoot could be watched with interest wending their way to camp with their families and well-filled baskets of provisions to supplement food purchased from tables of the tent-holders. Quite dramatic was the breaking of camp. Bands of persons, late on the closing Sunday, traversed the grounds singing songs of praise and shouting when the spirit prompted. Then came the Monday which meant the departure of the tenters. Words cannot paint a satisfactory picture of camp for this was not a recreational festival but the end of a harvest in the open for saving souls.³⁶

Every family was assigned a table location based upon its own designated tree. The tree served as a post for the electrical wiring that supplied illumination to the tables. To this day, people can go to Johnson’s Park and identify the oak trees that belonged to certain families. **(Figures IV-20, IV-21, and IV-22)** The tables themselves were made of wood posts and beams and featured a canvas roof. The materials used to assemble them were brought from home and the structures erected at the campground. The sides of the “tables” were left open to the air except for an actual table and bench that projected out for patrons/guests who wanted to buy food. At the center of the table were open fires, which warmed large kettles. Later on, portable stoves replaced the open fires.



Figure IV-20: Johnson's Park today, the former Emory Grove Camp Meeting retains mature oak trees from the camp meeting era. (Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission)



Figure IV-21: The baseball field at Emory Grove, the former site of the illuminated baseball park established by Edward Johnson in the late 1940s. In the background is a smaller group of the grove of trees that sheltered the Emory Grove Camp Meeting.



Figure IV-22: Richard Tyler standing against his family's designated tree where his family camped at the Emory Grove Camp Meeting site that is now part of Johnson's Park in Gaithersburg. (Hoachlander Davis Photography, June 2004)

The tables are significant not only as folk ‘architecture,’ but because the food prepared and served at camp carries some of the strongest memories for campgoers, according to those interviewed in oral histories. Country ham dinners and fried chicken served by the worshippers in between services were the biggest sellers. In addition, there was cabbage, corn, potatoes, and many homemade cakes, pies, and even ice cream. As ice became more available in the 20th century, people opened concession stands where they sold ice cream cones and soft drinks.

Most important to the meeting experience, however, was the idea of fellowship. Like many of the camp meetings, there were three primary services - morning, afternoon, and evening. It was the afternoon service of the second Sunday of camp (the third Sunday in August) that was the most eagerly anticipated event. It always drew the largest crowds and the best visiting ministers. These men were described as “hellfire-and-brimstone ministers” by people who recalled their sermons. Although the jerking and falling of the early-19th century never were a part of the Emory Grove tradition, “shouting and jubilation” certainly were. People recalled times when the pastors would spontaneously lead the congregation out of the tabernacle, and into the woods, singing hymns as they moved through the grove, before returning back to the tabernacle to resume the service.³⁷ And the camp meetings were hot, but people stayed and listened to the uplifting sermons, aided by hand-held fans supplied by a local undertaker.

The program for the camp meeting in the 1950s included a 10:00 a.m. church school, 11:00 a.m. sermon, 3:00 p.m. sermon, and, on the second and third Sundays, an 8:00 p.m. sermon. Some of the preachers who came to speak to the worshippers were: Rev. T.H. Reed, Rev. Moses Prather, Rev. Richard H. Johnson, Rev. Edwin Prather, Rev. I.H. Gray, Rev. J.J. Barnes, and Rev. Wm. H. Tyler. **(Figure IV-23)** William Henry Tyler was the father of Ruize Tyler (the store owner) and the grandfather of Richard Tyler. Tyler preached not only in Montgomery County, but also in Southern Maryland and West Virginia, and always delivered a sermon on one of the Sundays reserved for camp meeting. Moses Prather, who is believed to have grown up in Emory Grove as well, moved away to serve as pastor of a Virginia community, but always returned to deliver vibrant sermons at the Emory Grove camp meetings as well. Some people who attended camp meetings grew into adulthood finding the church. One such person was Reverend Glen Taylor, whose occupation was as an electrician, but who became pastor of Jerusalem Baptist Church after years of being an Emory Grove resident and campgoer. **(Figure IV-24)**

Like most camp meetings, singing was an enormous part of the Emory Grove gospel tradition. Many of the hymns came from the Methodist Hymnbook, and included: “Precious Lord, Take My Hand,” “Blessed Assurance,” “Jesus is Mine,” “What a Friend We Have in Jesus,” and others. Early on, the Emory Grove United Methodist Church on the corner adjacent to the campground formed a men’s choir **(Figure IV-25)** and later would form its own gospel group, known as the Gospelettes. Traveling preachers always would bring their own choirs. Joan Kelley recalled that brass bands would even perform at camp meeting services.



Figure IV-23: Reverend Barrington, preacher at Emory Grove during the 1950s. (Thelma Scott)



Figure IV-24: Reverend Glen Taylor, pastor of Jerusalem Baptist Church and a lifelong Emory Grove camp meeting attendee. (Hoachlander Davis Photography, June 2004)



Figure IV-25: Emory Grove Church's Men's Choir (Thelma Scott)

The emotionalism of the black camp meeting- and, in particular the singing and body movement - was explained by Reverend Glen Taylor in his oral history interview for the project. Taylor explained it this way:

Once you've been in the tradition of [a] black church, particularly [a] black Baptist church and the Methodist church I grew up in, people got emotionally involved in their singing, and you're going to have to understand that these people came out of slave tradition, where they had to give vent to the master's wishes. And when they came to worship, this was the only time they could really express themselves in all the agony and the depression and those things that they had to live through on a weekly basis, even after slavery, working for almost nothing and living under impoverished conditions, and the only thing they had to hold on to was the church and a hope of a better future for themselves and their children. So when God, when they felt that God had brought them through another week and that God had blessed through, he provided food for the families and shelter for them to live in, and a reasonable portion of health, this was the time that they could really express that, and they

became so thankful for what God had done for them, the emotions would sometimes overflow and they would, some people would cry and some people would shout.³⁸

Despite the fact that the Emory Grove Camp Meeting site was a dry, dusty place (no paved roads, little grass under the trees), everyone wore his or her finest clothes while camp was in session. People shined and polished their shoes and wore white clothing, despite the fact that it would be less than clean within minutes of arriving at the campground. Richard Tyler remembered it this way:

And by the time that I could walk from my house through the woods to the campground, before I even got in, my shoes were just covered with dirt, but I still had to have them shining before I could leave the house, and everyone wore their finest clothes. Men wore their hats. Ladies wore their hats. Hot as blazes, but they were dressed in suits.³⁹

If you were African-American and a Methodist in Montgomery County or Washington, D.C., you almost surely attended the Emory Grove Camp Meeting. In the 1950s, admission to the Emory Grove Camp Meeting was a minimal 25 cents for adults and 10 cents for children. The crowds were estimated by attendees to have reached 3,000 to 4,000 people.

Emory Grove, however, was not the only black camp meeting in the county. A smaller gathering was held at Boyds, also in Montgomery County, in the 1950s-1960s. Owned by the Davis family, the meeting at Boyds was held on property that was not considered buildable and was located adjacent to the separately owned Rockville Crushed Stone. The Davis family decided to create a ballpark there and build a pavilion for family picnics. Designated 'Oak Haven Park,' it was not a formal camp meeting, but there were several years where, for two or three Sundays in August, preachers would come to speak.

Between the 1940s and 1960s, entertainment and baseball had become a large draw in Emory Grove. As Richard Tyler remembers it, the camp meeting itself was shut down when it reached a point that religion was no longer the main draw, and with the concern that the event was perhaps becoming too commercial. The shutdown took place in 1967, when the camp meeting was officially closed by local health officials citing sanitation problems. The outdoor cooking at the meeting, long a time-honored tradition, failed to meet health codes. The privies dotting the landscape aided to the impression of inadequate sanitation.

But Emory Grove residents were reluctant to let go of the camp tradition. In 1976, an event titled "Contribution to Bicentennial," was advertised in a flier that noted: "As of old, bring your lunch baskets for your family and friends." Today, there is a one-day camp meeting or sorts on the grounds, where people gather under the same oaks on the fourth Sunday in August. The event is both picnic and religious revival. The Emory Grove Church prepares most of the food.

But the memory of the century-long Emory Grove camp meeting remains alive to those who attended camp. Camp signaled a tremendous sense of reunion. In his oral history interview, Richard Tyler notes that it was all about "bringing people together from the surrounding

communities on three Sundays in August and seeing people that you hadn't seen for the whole year, coming together, fellowshiping with them, breaking bread with them, worshipping with them, and being with them throughout the course of the day..."⁴⁰ Reverend Glen Taylor stated that camp meeting was "a place of gathering, it was a place of worship, it was a place of fellowship, and it didn't matter where you were from and what denomination you belonged to, you were included...." He recalled people just "sing [ing] from the heart."⁴¹ And Lottie Bernice Gaines, who came annually to Emory Grove from the Sandy Spring community representing the Sharpsburg Methodist Church recalled the strong feelings of reconnection that were a result of camp meeting. "Emory Grove brought . . . togetherness of different families," a simple statement that spoke a world of tradition (**Figure IV-26**).



Figure IV-26: Lottie Bernice Gaines, a regular Emory Grove camp meeting attendee from the Sharpsburg Methodist Church in Sandy Spring. (Hoachlander Davis Photography, June 2004)

The Community of Emory Grove

The camp meeting at Emory Grove was a vital force within the community of Emory Grove, which sprung up on land typical of that sold to former slaves, meaning it was unsuited to farming. The oral histories of Emory Grove camp meeting goers dwell not only on the camp meeting, but also on the Emory Grove community itself, and because of its demise that history is relayed in this report as well.

The newly freed men of Emory Grove were forced to work for meager wages farming other (white) people's land in the warmer months and cutting wood in the winter months. The Emory Grove women were often employed as domestics in the homes of Washington Grove and Gaithersburg's white residents. Several Emory Grove women also appear in the 1880 census as "washer women," people who took home other people's laundry, while a few served as midwives. Early residents often worked close to home despite the Metropolitan Branch's Washington Grove stop, for Jim Crow laws definitively on the books by the 1890s restricted the travel of African-Americans on public trains.

The people in Emory Grove lived in a kinship community, where everyone was either related to his/her neighbor or considered that person extended family. According to multiple oral history interviewees, everyone took care of everyone else in the intimate community. Doors to the modest but welcoming houses were left unlocked. **(Figure IV-27)** Food was always offered to any visitor who happened to be in someone's home at mealtime. Hunger, sickness, and suffering were all met with the steadfast belief that community members were there to look out for one another, in every possible way. There was a strong sense of safety in knowing each and every neighbor, and an even stronger feeling of rootedness. **(Figures IV-28 and IV-29)** Much of the activity was done communally. As one interviewee explained, everyone owned chickens and hogs and butchering was a fall tradition. Neighbors helped each other slaughter and prepare the animals for food each year.



Figure IV-27: Alice Mobeley and her son, Minnie Duvall and her daughter, and Roland King (seated), friends in the close-knit Emory Grove community. A typical modest house is shown in the background. (Thelma Scott)



Figure IV-28: Nin Jackson and Marion Frazier in front of houses in Emory Grove, apparently prepared for some social event. Modest two-story houses can be seen in the background.
(Thelma Scott)

The community's physical landscape, now erased, has been described as a rather dense cluster of houses laid out without benefit of a formal street plan, but based upon a network of informal "lanes." These lanes, which were basically extended driveways of dirt and rock, diverged from the one diagonal road that led back into the community from the north side of Laytonsville Road. An aerial photograph of the Gaithersburg area from May 1959 shows the Emory Grove community located on the north side of Laytonsville Road (**Figure IV-30**) The lane system and its intricate connection of houses and pathways was described by longtime resident Richard Tyler in his oral history interview:

The lanes would go back into the community, and there were houses all back in these little enclaves, and there were several lanes that went back, and you would be surprised if you went back in those lanes to see that there were houses all over the place. All of the houses were connected by pathways or paths all through the community. Some led right through people's yards, and that was not a problem. You'd walk right through the yard."⁴²

The community of Emory Grove was in indisputably poor condition. Essentially, no houses in the community had indoor plumbing. Almost all had a privy in the backyard and got water from

a series of wells dug throughout the neighborhood. Many homes did not have electricity, even through the 1960s.



Figure IV-29: Sisters Priscilla and Thelma Taylor (now Scott) standing at a convergence of the “lanes” that laced through the community. (Thelma Scott)

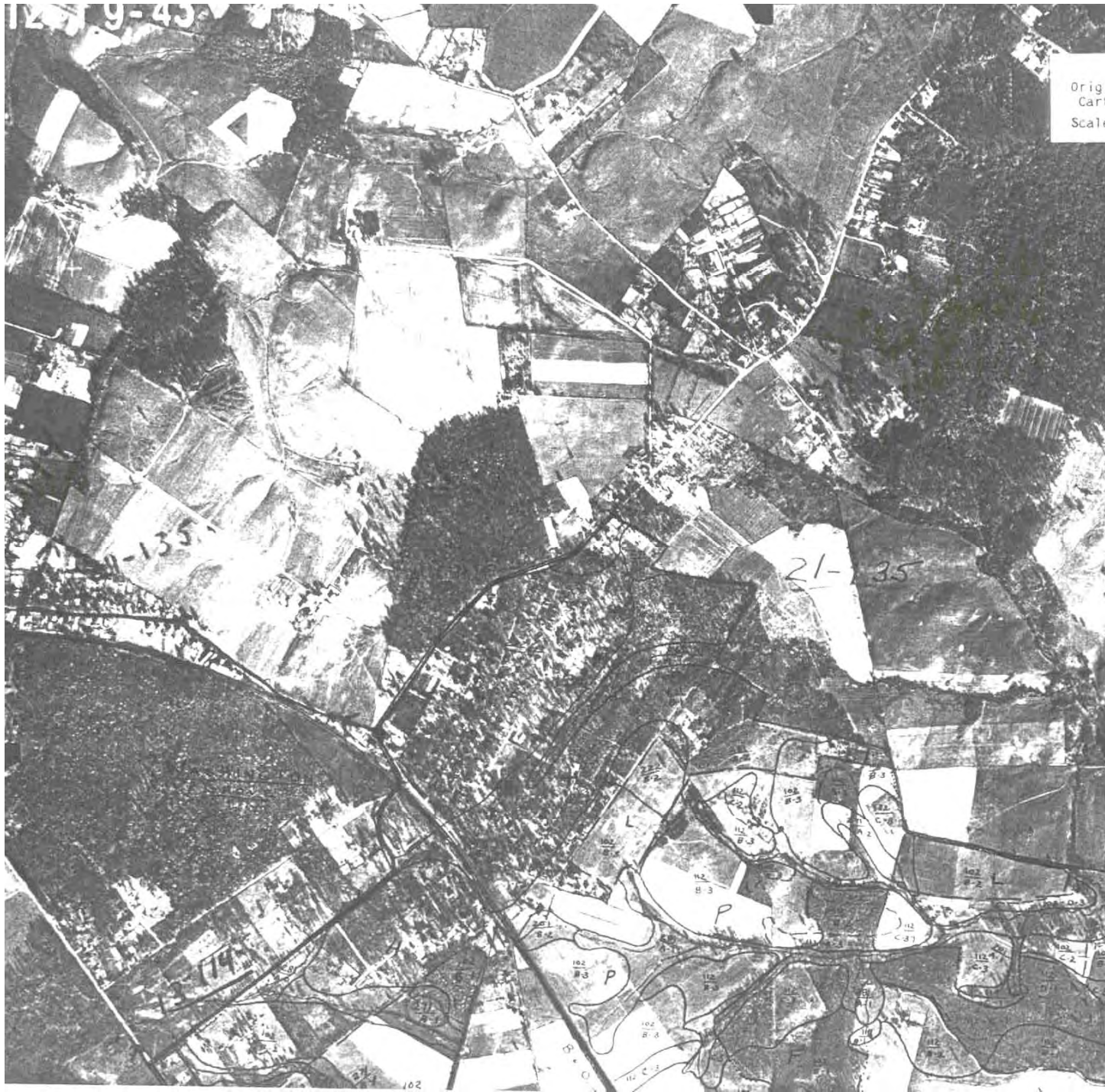


Figure IV-30: Aerial photograph of Emory Grove and vicinity from 1959. Community of houses lies on the north side of the convergence of Washington Grove Lane and Emory Grove Road towards upper right. The camp meeting was east, beyond the open field. (Montgomery County Archives)

The Emory Grove Methodist Episcopal Church functioned as the heart of both the community and camp meeting. The old log building stood until 1903, when it was replaced by a frame church on the same ground. (That building has now been somewhat altered and is covered in artificial siding, but still stands.) **(Figure IV-31)** There were church stewards, a full Sunday School, and other very active committees **(Figure IV-32)**. The first parsonage was built in 1911 on Emory Grove Road, but was razed in the 1950s because it too had no running water. The new parsonage, a ranch-style house built in 1957 and facing Washington Grove Lane, still stands.



Figure IV-31: Emory Grove United Methodist Church on Emory Grove Road, built in 1903.
(Carolyn Taylor and the Montgomery County Historical Society)



Figure IV-32: Early stewards of the Emory Grove Methodist Church (Thelma Scott)

Despite the lack of modern amenities, the community was a wonderful place to raise a family and the area surrounding it perceived as a potential draw for others. As one example, in 1909, Mattie R. Slater carved out a subdivision called “Emory Grove Park” south of the “Camp Grounds” on the opposite side of the Laytonsville Road. One presumes that the subdivision was intended for African Americans, with streets named Douglas Avenue, Emory Street, Grove Street, Camp Street, etc.” (Figure IV-33) Deeds show that the subdivision was begun - for example, lot 21 in Block 1 was conveyed to Amanda C. Waters in 1911 – but the extent of its development is unknown. The 1959 aerial photograph shows houses lining the south side of the Laytonsville Road across from the open area of the campground. (Refer to Figure IV-29)

Starting in the 1930s, the need for manual farm labor declined as people were replaced by machines. Like all of America, several of Emory Grove’s residents were out of work during the Depression, but many began to find jobs at the Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission, the National Institutes of Health, and the Naval Medical Center as these large government facilities grew in the middle decades of the 20th century. Due to workplace prejudice, the jobs they found were almost invariably in custodial positions. After the war, Emory Grove men continued to work in the same areas or in the cafeterias of the Montgomery County Public Schools. By the late 1950s, some of the women in the community no longer worked as domestics in private homes, but branched out to work at large government agencies and private corporations such as the National Bureau of Standards, the Atomic Energy Commission, and I.B.M. Eventually, some residents were able to work in positions not previously open to them, such as typists, clerks, technicians, and skilled laborers.

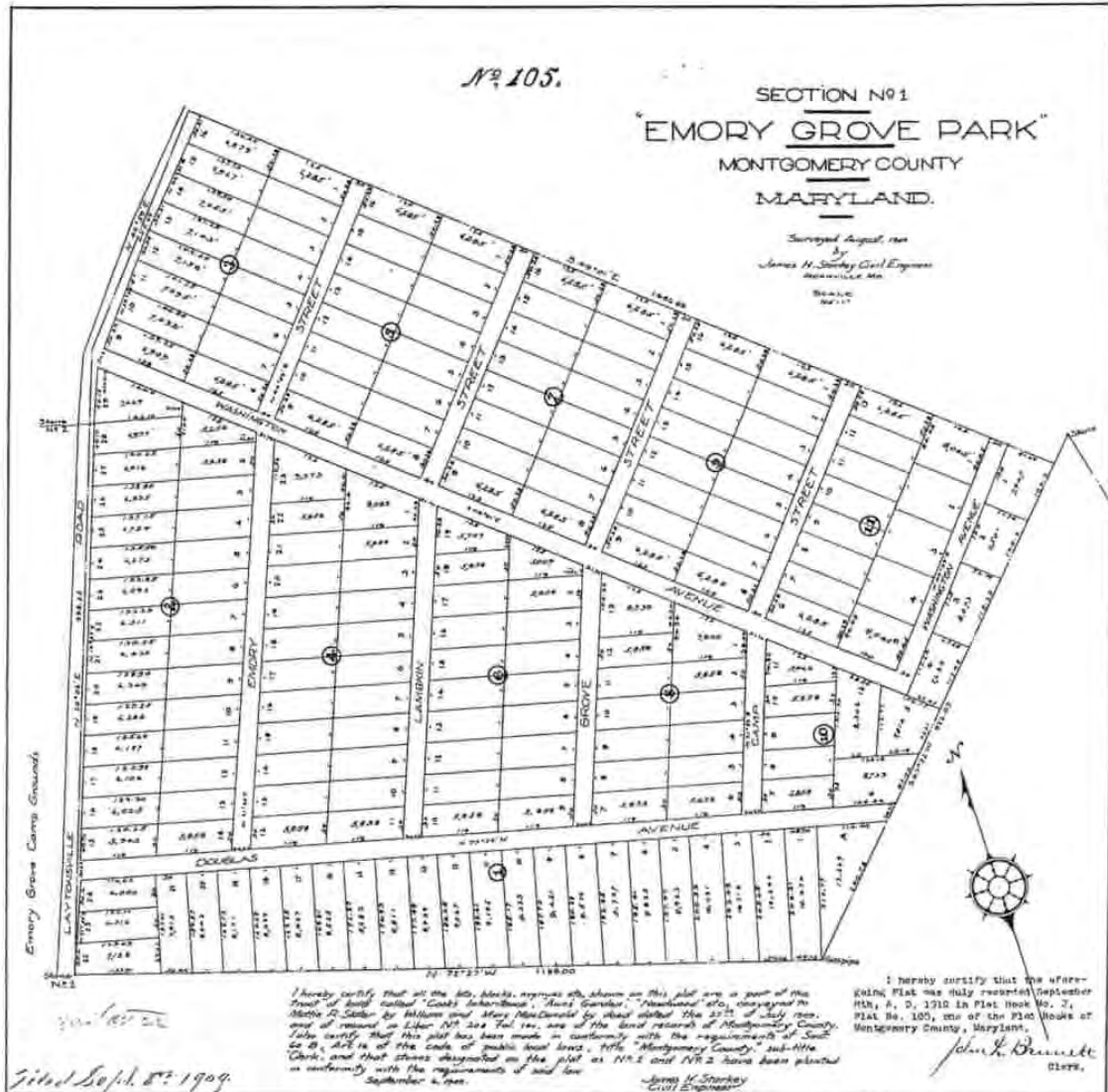


Figure IV-33: Emory Grove Park, a 1909 subdivision plat for the south side of the Laytonsville Road. Most of the lots remained paper lots only. (Maryland State Archives)

A number of Emory Grove residents or close neighbors ran their own enterprises. There were many small stores in Emory Grove, most of them located in people's homes. Several of the stores were based in houses on the campground itself at the turn of the century. The early immediate storeowners were: Aaron Luster, Frank Duvall, and W. Frazier. Other storeowners close by were Samuel Claggett, whose store was at the corner of Muncaster Mill Road and Route 124; W. Dorsey, with a store at the corner of Emory Grove Road and Washington Grove Lane; and Rev. Bailey, with a store close to the campground. In the 1920s and 1930s, there were stores run by the Guest & Patton family on the Gaither Property, by Millard Sellman (no location given); and by the Pugh family, near Mr. Edward Johnson's Tavern. Mr. Guest and Rev. William Tyler acted as hucksters who sold their wares from portable vehicles. There were also white-owned stores that could be frequented by the black community; namely Woodward's Store

right on the Laytonsville Road and another store in Redland. In 1948, one of the community's most prized stores was opened on Emory Grove Road by Ruize O. Tyler and his wife Minnie Tyler. Mr. Tyler was a Navy veteran and entrepreneur and grew to be a major community leader. **(Figure IV-34)**



Figure IV-34: Tyler's Market facing Emory Grove Road, demolished during urban renewal. Today, the site hosts a new community center. (Thelma Scott)

Starting in the 1930s, during the Depression, entertainment was added to the essentials of living in Emory Grove. A pioneering black entrepreneur, Mr. Edward Johnson opened a tavern on Washington Grove Lane in 1930. Mr. James Duvall, another businessman, opened a tavern/night club, known as the Du-Drop-Inn, on Emory Grove Road in 1947. This tavern eventually featured some of the top black performers from all over the country. The campground itself was purchased in 1947 by Edward Johnson from its owners, Charles E. Ross, Nathan C. Duvall, Horace B. Duvall, Frances Ricks, and Carroll Washington. On part of the property, he built what is claimed to be the first illuminated baseball park in the county. In the days before African-Americans were allowed to play for the major leagues, many of baseball's best black teams played at Emory Grove. It was host to many different black teams, included Olney, Laytonsville, Sandy Spring, Stewart Town, Colesville, and, of course, "Emory Grove." **(Figure IV-35)**. Several teams of the Negro League played at Johnson's ballpark.



Figure IV-35: Emory Grove Baseball Team. (Thelma Scott)

During the Second World War, the land adjacent to the campground was overtaken by the government for use as a German prison camp. Campgoers and Emory Grove residents recall the prison structure with its tall watchtower just east of the campground, on what had been Mr. Winslow's farm. Joan Kelley recalled that the prisoners were taken in trucks to harvest crops on people's farms or sent to a canning factory in Gaithersburg. The Emory Grove campgoers also recall seeing the German prisoners marching up and down the Laytonsville Road, singing German songs. The stone gates marking the entrance to the Emory Grove church cemetery, still standing on the right side of the former campground but in great disrepair, were built by those prisoners. **(Figure IV-36)**



Figure IV-36: Stone gates built by German prisoners during World War II while adjacent site to the camp meeting was used as a German POW camp. Townhouses built during urban renewal period shown in the background. (Montgomery County Historic Preservation Section)

By the mid-1960s, the residents of Emory Grove had grown weary of the lack of sewers and water and the inadequate condition of the roads in their community, which were impassable after a hard rain. When attempts to get County help to add sewers or install plumbing in the houses failed, the residents were advised to apply for urban renewal funds from the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Emory Grove became one of HUD's first "conservation and rehabilitation" projects in the area. Unfortunately, neither of those terms apply to what transpired in Emory Grove over the next 20 years, considering that what occurred was demolition and new construction.

The number of houses razed totaled 125. Also razed were the community's only grocery store (Tyler's Store), along with such signature landmarks as Johnson's Tavern and the Du-Drop Inn. After the initial demolition phase, only 19 houses were left standing, but the number dwindled further. Residents were told that they would be temporarily removed from their community and that would return to new homes that they could afford. What transpired was that their homes were bought out by the government for approximately \$25,000 while the new homes that were built to replace them cost over \$75,000. The new replacement privately-owned housing stock was unaffordable to the Emory Grove residents the government was supposed to serve. Very few Emory Grove natives could afford to stay in the community.

Whereas the original Emory Grove houses had all been detached houses, the new government constructed buildings that were largely townhomes. Whereas most of Emory Grove's development had been to the north of the Laytonsville Road, the new development was largely to its south. What was built on the north side of the Road, the heart of old Emory Grove, were single-family detached houses of a substantially higher price bracket. Today, Emory Grove is a mixture of 350 subsidized rental public housing units, lived in primarily by minorities, and several subdivisions of detached single-family houses, lived in largely by white families.

THE MARYLAND-VIRGINIA CONFERENCE'S FREE METHODIST CHURCH CAMPGROUND AT SPENCERVILLE

Spencerville is a community that has, thus far, been spared the erasure of its cultural legacy. The community was founded in the northeastern section of Montgomery County between 1840 and 1860, when Pennsylvanians from Southampton Township in Bucks County and Moorland Township in Montgomery County moved downward into Maryland. William Spencer, first postmaster, along with many of his relatives, settled the town that received his name. The community grew into a small, but thriving agricultural center. By 1931, the first camp meeting in Montgomery County affiliated with the Free Methodist denomination chose Spencerville as its permanent home, but not until after the Free Methodists had camped at many other areas along the Baltimore-Washington Corridor.

The Free Methodists became a distinct religious entity in 1860, when a group of Methodists, under the leadership of Benjamin Titus Roberts, split entirely from the then-known Methodist Church in Pekin, New York. Their goal was the attainment of three central freedoms: 1) the ability to sit in church free of charge, as opposed to having to pay pew rental, 2) the abolition of slavery, and 3) the right to enjoy "freedom of the Spirit in worship and daily living."⁴³ The first Free Methodist religious gathering in the Washington area met on September 16, 1879 in Alexandria, Virginia in a member's home. The family that hosted that event, the George Peverills, would later become core members of the Spencerville Camp Meeting. **(Figure IV-37)** The presiding elder at the Alexandria service is said to have then traveled across the Fourteenth Street Bridge into Washington, D.C., where historical records report he founded the B.T. Roberts Memorial Church later that same day. Interest was growing in this new denomination. In addition to churches, educational institutions were being established throughout the country, training pastors, teachers, medical professionals, and missionaries.

In 1899, a Free Methodist Society was desired in Spencerville. A pamphlet history of the Free Methodist Church in Spencerville describes its first gathering in the vicinity, a *tent meeting*, as the 1899 Cloverly meeting on the Colesville Pike.⁴⁴ The church history also mentions a tent meeting at Crosdale's Grove in Burtonsville. Gradually, semi-monthly services for the emerging Free Methodist Society were held in Spencerville Hall and the group became part of a Rockville, Avery, Layhill circuit. By 1905, the Free Methodists had established enough of a sizeable population in Spencerville to warrant the construction of a church. Land was donated by Albert Sergeant (alternately spelled Sargent), a local Spencerville pastor who had made his money as a Wilmington, Delaware businessman. Luther Poole and Herbert Thompson donated the timber from their lands for the building of the first church, a frame structure on the Spencerville Road.

Almost fifty years later, in 1954, the group's church building was refaced in brick and had its tower completely reconfigured. In 1964, another remodeling added a formal sanctuary.



Figure IV-37: The very first Free Methodist Church in the area was founded in the home of this Alexandria family in 1879. The George and Fannie Peverill family, seen here circa 1909, and its descendants went on to become founding members of the Spencerville Camp Meeting. (Marti Theune, historian, Maryland Virginia Conference of the Free Methodist Church Camp Meeting)

The Free Methodists in the greater Washington area originally were part of the Philadelphia District of the New York Conference of Free Methodists. The first *camp meeting* held by this conference in the metropolitan area occurred at Falls Church, Virginia in 1889. From there, the camp meeting tradition took hold. Over the next 23 years, several churches were established in Maryland, and with their inclusion, interest in camping expanded. Early encampments were held at: Avery, Maryland; North East, Maryland; Franconia, Virginia; and Arcadia, Maryland (approximately 20 miles north of Baltimore).

By 1912, the Philadelphia District of the New York Conference of the Free Methodists had moved the official camp meeting to Savage, Maryland. **(Figure IV-38)** Savage was located halfway between Baltimore and Washington. Again, Albert Sergeant offered his own funds to erect fifty tents for families and a large tent for use as a tabernacle or worship center there. The Savage Camp Meeting succeeded in achieving approximately 150 conversions. It was reported that most of those who were saved that summer later joined more traditional Methodist Churches because of parents hesitant to have children join the more novel Free Methodist societies. Nevertheless, the camp meeting phenomena continued over the years, and crowds overflowed the grounds.

By 1919, because of growth, the camp meeting moved again, this time to Washington, D.C., on the Bladensburg Road at Mount Hamilton, opposite Mt. Olivet Cemetery. In 1920, the meeting site was shifted slightly, just onto Mount Hamilton Road across the main entrance to the cemetery. Fifty army tents and 150 cots were installed there for camp meeting by the Philadelphia District, which had incorporated under the District of Columbia laws. By 1922, there were 100 tents in regular use at the Mount Hamilton site, but a problem ensued. The District elders requested to build a frame tabernacle on the site and the District of Columbia building department refused, citing the fire department's regulation that all structures within a certain distance of the city center must be constructed in masonry.



Figure IV-38: Early campgoers at the Savage Camp Meeting of the Free Methodist Society, in the early 1900s. (Marti Theune, historian, Maryland-Virginia Conference of the Free Methodist Church Camp Meeting)

In 1923, given the District's restrictions on building in masonry and the attendees' interest in building actual cottages, the Quarterly Conference of the Philadelphia District decided that the site was too costly to develop and sold it. One year later, a new wooded lot was leased from a farm owner at Glenmont, at Georgia Avenue and the Glenmont-Colesville Road (today's Randolph Road). The August 1924 meeting at Glenmont reportedly was attended by 1600 people. But in 1931, that wooded lot was sold and the new owner was not interested in continuing the lease with the camp meeting association because he wanted to farm the land. It was then that a site was found in Spencerville, a community that had attracted a strong Free Methodist population.

Spencerville was, by the 1930s, a good choice for the camp meeting, being close to both Washington and Baltimore: “seven miles from Laurel and eighteen miles from Washington on a good road.”⁴⁵ It was also a very rural location, with some sizeable family farms in the immediate vicinity of the proposed camp meeting. Luther Poole’s farm, the Fairmont Farm, was located across from what was called “Camp Ground Road” in the 1940s and is now called Peach Orchard Road. That farm had been visited by several of the Free Methodist’s families when the camp was still being held in Savage, Maryland. **(Figure IV-39)**

The Conference leaders purchased six acres from Herbert Thompson and Luther Poole for \$200 an acre. Albert Sergeant again provided the funds for the camp meeting, with a clause in his will absolving the Conference of its debt. To honor this man’s contribution, the Quarterly Conference named the grounds the “Albert Sergeant Grove.”

The new site was not only thick with trees (described as “a forest”), but also overgrown with vines and in need of much clearing.⁴⁶ District Elder Forrest F. Shoup supervised the clearing and camp opened at the Spencerville site in the summer of 1932. While many of the camp meeting visitors came right from Spencerville, pastors and members from all the conference churches attended with many traveling quite a distance every summer to attend camp meeting. Such was the case with the Peverill family, whose origins were in Alexandria, Virginia, and who had, in fact, hosted the very first Free Methodist church meeting in this area in their home. Several of the conference family members that attend camp meeting annually are fourth, fifth, and sixth generation campgoers.



Figure IV-39: The “Beauties of Fairmont Farm, Spencerville, 1914.” Campgoers from the Savage Camp Meeting spending the day at Luther Poole’s Farm on the Spencerville Road. (Marti Theune, historian, Maryland-Virginia Conference of the Free Methodist Church Camp Meeting)

The earliest reference to the Spencerville camp meeting found in a search of the *Montgomery Sentinel* dates to June 29, 1933.⁴⁷ The newspaper reported:

The annual camp meeting of the Philadelphia district of the New York Conference, Free Methodist Church, will be held at Spencerville, August 11 to 20, it has been announced. . . . The daily program arranged for the meeting includes morning holiness services at 6 A.M.; love feast, 9:30 A.M.; preaching, 10:30 A.M.; vacation Bible school, 1:30 P.M.; preaching, 2:30 P.M.; young people's service, 6:30 P.M.; preaching 7:30 P.M.; camp Sunday school on Sundays at 1:30 P.M. A layman's service will be arranged for some time during the camp, while a service under the auspices of the Woman's Missionary Society is scheduled for August 13 at 2:30 P.M.⁴⁸

Tracing its origin from 1889 to finding a permanent site in 1931, this Depression-era campground fits within a nationwide pattern of a reawakening of the desire for outdoor spiritual revival. The Damascus Camp Meeting, another "holiness" entity within Montgomery County, was also established in 1932 and exhibited a similar pattern upon the land.

In that same summer of 1933, *The Sentinel* reported that a dormitory with 32 rooms furnished with cots had been built and they were available for a low price at the Spencerville camp. The money was loaned by Fillmore M. Boring of Baltimore, who, like Sergeant, cancelled the debt owed to him by the camp founders in his will. (This original dormitory no longer stands.) Both lodging and meals were available by contacting the camp meeting association.⁴⁹ The tabernacle was built in the early 1930s and has always held the central position within the grove. Its plans were executed by F.F. Shoup, Calvin Butts, Lorenzo Butts, and Wayman Fincham. Calvin Butts was most responsible for the design and construction of the building, which is now called the "Calvin Butts Memorial Tabernacle." A portable school building purchased from the District of Columbia government became the site's first dining hall, and continues in use as of this writing.

In 1939, the Maryland-Virginia Conference became an independent conference apart from the Philadelphia District of the New York Conference and the Spencerville campground became the new entity's headquarters. The Conference Superintendent began to reside at the campground site, although his house was not built until 1941. Conference officers were able to purchase an extra 5.5 acres of land in 1944, and in 1978, an additional approximate one-half acre was donated by Estelle (Nehouse) Van Ness, stepdaughter of Luther Poole, bringing the total land accumulation to about 13 acres. While some of the cottages had been built in the 1930s, many were built between 1944 and 1948 from wood cleared on the new acreage. Some of the felled wood also was given for use in building a parsonage for the Bethel Church, in Fort Washington, Maryland.

At its height, in the 1940s and 1950s, the Spencerville campground had 69 cottages. Returning families came back every summer for fellowship and reunion. **(Figure IV-40)** Today, there has been a loss of cottages (no more than 45 remain) and many are in a challenging state of repair. The camp is laid out in a horseshoe plan, with a partial second row on the west side and a short

row at the north end. A single road winds around the perimeter of the property behind most of the cottages. There is one, paved pedestrian path that leads on the diagonal from the dining hall to the tabernacle. **(Figure IV-41)**

Despite hard times, Spencerville is the only camp meeting in Montgomery County that has managed to survive while still honoring its original purpose, the summer camp meeting. The Spencerville site is described in its Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties form as an “outstanding example of traditional site design of southern camp meeting grounds, characterized by the use of a level wooded landscape cleared of underbrush with a horseshoe-like layout of cottages organized around a frame tabernacle to shelter the preacher and audience.”⁵⁰ **(Figures IV 42- IV 44)** Sustaining the camp meeting, however, has not been without its struggles.

By the early 1990s, the camp was in decline as people turned to more contemporary vacations. The conference leaders put the property up for sale. Thanks to the efforts of a few individuals, the idea of using the camp as a year-round retreat center and traditional family camp meeting site was accepted and the land was removed from the market. The Peach Orchard Christian Retreat Center, together with the historic Free Methodist Maryland-Virginia Conference camp, continues in its mission, providing opportunities for spiritual growth for adults, teens, and children. Its main building, facing Peach Orchard Road, was completed in 1979. The motel-style retreat center’s ability to host mission groups (e.g., the Youth on Mission program) and summer youth camps, as well as many other guests throughout the year, has helped allow the time-honored camp meeting tradition to continue. The largest group of participants at camp meeting during the week of July currently comes from Rockville, but the majority of campers are teenagers and children. And, just as they did in the past, many people travel long distances to worship and fellowship together in this primitive but idyllic setting.



MAY 52

Figure IV-40: Five of the Peverill sisters at the Spencerville Camp Meeting, May 1952. (Marti Theune, historian, Maryland Virginia Conference of the Free Methodist Church Camp Meeting)



Figure IV-41: The Albert Sergeant Grove and its path at the Spencerville Camp Meeting (Elizabeth Jo Lampl, Montgomery County Historic Preservation Section)



Figure IV-42: Cottages at Spencerville. (Elizabeth Jo Lampl, Montgomery County Historic Preservation Section)



Figure IV-43: Cottages at Spencerville (Elizabeth Jo Lampl, Montgomery County Historic Preservation Section)

DAMASCUS

Like Spencerville, Damascus was a rural community, but its roots stretched back even further. Damascus began as the “back country” to the Frederick area, laid out in the mid-18th century. Indicative of the area’s rural origins, Damascus residents were simply known as “back inhabitants.” Roads were established along the ridgelines that fed to the Catoctin Mountains and farms were oriented toward waterways, most notably toward Seneca Creek. The crossroads community of Damascus proper formed at the intersection of two major early ridgeline roads: Ridge Road (Route 27) and Damascus Road (Route 108). The Ridge Road-Damascus Road corridor was one of several principal market roads established in 1774. It was part of a regional route established by the General Assembly for a market road from Frederick to Annapolis. This road was later improved as a post road leading from New Market to Laurel. As late as 1879, Damascus was still in the heart of an extensive tobacco region, despite the crop’s decline elsewhere in the county.

In the early 20th century, road improvements brought new growth to the Damascus area. In 1914, the State had a program to connect counties with the port city of Baltimore. The program would not pave roads in incorporated towns, however, so Damascus, previously incorporated, was dissolved as a municipality to make way for the paving of Route 27. This road, which provided access to the National Road that ultimately led to Baltimore, was the first paved road connecting the Frederick area to Washington, D.C. In the mid-1920s the road from Damascus to Laytonsville (Route 108), or Damascus Road, also was paved as a two-lane concrete road.

Following road improvements, the community of Damascus thrived. The post office, which had been closed since 1908, re-opened in 1923. The Damascus Community Fair was organized in 1927, in order to educate farmers and home economists and to promote community spirit. Other examples of the vitality of Damascus during this era include the opening of the Bank of Damascus (1921) and the accreditation of Damascus High School (1924). It was during this period that the camp meeting was established.

In 1931, the very same year that the Spencerville camp meeting opened, members of the Bethesda United Methodist Church on Bethesda Church Road in Damascus decided to organize a tent camp meeting on William and Cassandra Burdette Beall’s land, then considered part of the Browningsville area. The first camp meeting was held for ten consecutive days, starting on the first Thursday after the first Sunday in August, with the evening service being the most celebrated event. The first year, the Association voted to make the event a full two weeks and thereafter, the meeting was held for anywhere between ten days and two weeks.

Originally called “Beall’s Grove Camp Meeting,” the Browningsville/Damascus site is mentioned on the 1933 bylaws as the Damascus Camp Meeting, a name that was formally adopted in 1962. In the first year of its founding, the Beall’s Grove Camp Meeting is said to have attracted 75-100 people, most of them residents of Montgomery and Frederick Counties. The gatherers participated in outdoor religious exercises under a single, large tent and all denominations were invited to attend. By June of 1933, the group running the camp became officially known as the Montgomery County Interdenominational Holiness Association of Maryland and the Damascus

Camp Meeting became their place of business. This group was comprised of Nazarene, Wesleyan, and Methodist churches, but welcomed members “in good standing of some evangelical denomination.”⁵¹ The group had one overarching philosophy; the mission of the Montgomery County Holiness group was: “. . . to spread scriptural holiness throughout the land, principally through an annual camp meeting on its camp ground, preferably in August. We propose to spread scriptural holiness by proclaiming salvation to the unconverted and preaching the experience of entire sanctification amongst the justified.”⁵² The Sentinel reported the following message on August 24, 1933:

Evangelistic services, which started August 9, and will be brought to a close August 27, are attracting large crowds from this and neighboring communities. These meetings are being held morning, afternoon and evening of each day in a large tent on the farm of William Beall, near Browningsville. The service, which is non-denominational, is being conducted by J.R. Parker, evangelist, of Kentucky, assisted by Rev. F.R. Barnes, pastor of Montgomery M.E. Circuit, and W. E. Nelson, pastor of the Methodist Episcopal Church at Thurmont.⁵³

In 1934, Mr. Beall was so pleased with the camp meeting that he decided to deed 1 ½ acres of his “grove” to the camp meeting association on condition that the group would prohibit dancing, card playing, gambling, chance games or the like. Over time, the site would grow to 12 acres on a sloping hillside by the bank of Bethesda Church Road. The following year, in 1935, the community built a permanent tabernacle on the site, which became known as the Beall Memorial Tabernacle. According to members of the Spencerville Camp Meeting, Damascus’ somewhat smaller tabernacle was patterned on that of Spencerville and indeed is the same one-story, framed, pent-roof type of structure. Because of the tabernacle’s limited size, evening services during camp were attended by people who brought blankets and lawn chairs since they knew that all interior seats could well be taken. One of the early, most influential participants at Damascus was a Dr. Clayton S. Luce, who taught at Asbury College in Wilmore, Kentucky, but helped establish the Damascus Camp Meetings.

More communal structures were built on the campground, including meeting and dining halls, girls and boy’s dormitories, and indoor bathrooms. A series of small, one-story, one-room Masonite-clad cottages with projecting porches were added to the campus in a horseshoe shape (more like a “J” of cottages with two tiers of buildings on two sides). The horseshoe basically parallels Bethesda Church Road. There were also a few two-room double cottages. Today, approximately 45 of these cottages remain. Most are in need of maintenance. **(Figures IV-44- IV-47)**



Figure IV-44: View of cabins and interior horseshoe road that winds through campground.
(Elizabeth Jo Lampl, Montgomery County Historic Preservation Section)



Figure IV-45: Cabins at the bottom of the modified horseshoe plan at Damascus Camp Meeting.
(Elizabeth Jo Lampl, Montgomery County Historic Preservation Commission)



Figure IV-46: Ellen Culp, Rita Perna, Olga Fairfax, and one of the youth members at the Damascus Camp Meeting tabernacle. (Olga Fairfax)



Figure IV-47: Interior of the Damascus Camp Meeting tabernacle. (Elizabeth Jo Lampl, Montgomery County Historic Preservation Section)

Visitors to the meeting in the last few decades have hailed from Maryland, Virginia and Pennsylvania. The schedule for the recent camp meetings shows that they began with a tabernacle prayer meeting, followed by breakfast. Following that, there was a cottage chapel prayer meeting and a youth service that took place simultaneously with the morning preaching service and the children's meeting. The "dinner" was at 12:30 and was always the main meal of the day. Following "clean up and inspection," the youth would enjoy three hours of recreation while the adults participated in an afternoon bible service. "Supper," the lighter meal, was served at 5:00 p.m., followed by a youth meeting, "ring service," and evening service. The campground curfew was at 10:30 with mandatory lights out by 11:30 p.m. Damascus also had "love feasts" as part of their services. Several of the camp meetings used the term "Love Feast" to describe a meeting of testimony or personal experience that was also part of the camp meeting.

Like the Emory Grove camp meeting, the food at the Damascus camp meeting was recalled by the older campgoers with vivid memories. To them, the cooking was excellent, with most of it served buffet style, although the youth group would sometimes do the serving. And like Emory Grove, people would go to services in their best clothing. Some of the cabins featured a little arm sleeve for ironing that could be placed on a bed or counter for use in pressing clothing.

After years of successful operation, the camp meeting population declined in the late 20th century. In 2000, in accordance with Article IX of its bylaws, the Association sold the camp meeting site to a "like organization with Wesleyan holiness emphasis in their bylaws" and a non-profit status.⁵⁴ The buyer was the Damascus Wesleyan Church, whose deed provided that each summer the grounds would be transformed into a home for the Damascus Camp Meeting. The church remodeled the Dining Hall into its sanctuary and, shortly thereafter, in 2002, the Trustees of the camp meeting handed over operation of the Damascus Camp Meeting to the officers of the Damascus Wesleyan Church. (In 2002, by way of comparison, there were 81 Holiness camp meetings held across the county.) Although the church no longer runs a camp meeting at the former Damascus campground, it does sponsor youth camps throughout the summer and has a strong Spanish ministry. All of these functions make use of the many buildings on the site. The former dining hall, now greatly remodeled, serves as the church's main sanctuary.

NOTES

- ¹ Typescript from the Montgomery County Historical Society, "Appendix A: Dates, Preachers, Congregations of the Methodist Episcopal Church," Montgomery Circuit page. Filed under "Churches, Methodist."
- ² Richard K. MacMaster and Ray Eldon Hiebert, *A Grateful Remembrance* (Rockville, Maryland: The Montgomery County Historical Society and the Montgomery County Government, 1976), 212.
- ³ The church was located on today's Baker and Thomas Drives, just west of New Hampshire Avenue in the Meadowbrook subdivision.
- ⁴ Methodist Episcopal Church Typescript, Appendix D, Glossary of terms, filed under "Churches, Methodist," at the Montgomery County Historical Society.
- ⁵ Ned Bayley, *Colesville: The Development of a Community, its People, and its Natural Resources, Over a Period of Four Centuries*. (Colesville, Maryland, 1997).
- ⁶ Eileen McGuckian, "Maryland Methodism and the Jerusalem United Methodist Church, Rockville, Maryland, c. 1780-1915," *The Montgomery County Story*, November 1972, Vol. XV, No. 5, p. 5.
- ⁷ Richard K. MacMaster and Ray Eldon Hiebert, *A Grateful Remembrance: The Story of Montgomery County, Maryland: 1776-1976*, Rockville, Maryland: Montgomery County Government and the Montgomery County Historical Society, 1976, 212.
- ⁸ *Ibid.*
- ⁹ *The Sentinel*, August 29, 1879.
- ¹⁰ *The Sentinel*, July 30, 1880.
- ¹¹ Phillip K. Edwards, *Washington Grove, 1873-1937* (The Washington Grove Camp Meeting Association, 1988) 56.
- ¹² *The Sentinel*, July 8, 1880.
- ¹³ There are, undoubtedly, numerous other examples to be found, if one only had the time to pour through every summer issue of *The Sentinel*.
- ¹⁴ Milburn, "Washington Grove: A Reminiscence." Files of the Montgomery County Historic Preservation Section.
- ¹⁵ *The Sentinel*, August 20, 1875.
- ¹⁶ *The Sentinel*, August 31, 1877.
- ¹⁷ *The Sentinel*, July 16, 1880.
- ¹⁸ Edwards, *Washington Grove*, 98.
- ¹⁹ *The Sentinel*, August 8, 1873.
- ²⁰ *The Sentinel*, August 27, 1880.
- ²¹ *Ibid.*
- ²² *The Sentinel*, August 20, 1875.
- ²³ *The Sentinel*, August 15, 1879.
- ²⁴ Edwards, *Washington Grove*, 306.
- ²⁵ In the early days, that community reportedly hosted a "white canvas city of five hundred tents," but eventually was transformed into a more permanent campground, with many cottages, a tabernacle, and hotel on its grounds that date to the late 19th century. Information from *The Baltimore News*.
- ²⁶ The Emory Grove community information comes from *A Brief History of Emory Grove* by the Women's Society of Christian Service, Emory Grove United Methodist Church, 1970. Files of the Montgomery County Historical Society under Communities: Emory Grove. Information also comes from Montgomery County Historical Society's *Emory Grove: A Black Community of Yesteryear*, written as a draft for *A Brief History of Emory Grove*.
- ²⁷ Edwards, *Washington Grove*, 56.
- ²⁸ *The Sentinel*, September 18, 1879.
- ²⁹ Entourage, Inc., "Black Oral Study: Northeastern Montgomery County," August 1983, p. 11.
- ³⁰ Anthony Cohen, *The Underground Railroad in Montgomery County, Maryland: A History and Driving Guide* (Montgomery County Historical Society, 1995) 27.
- ³¹ Edwards, *Washington Grove*, 78-79.
- ³² Women's Society of Christian Service, *A Brief History of Emory Grove*.
- ³³ *The Sentinel*, July 9, 1880.
- ³⁴ *The Sentinel*, July 23, 1880.
- ³⁵ Typescript sheet at the Montgomery County Historical Society titled "Montgomery County, Md., 1865-1967: The Emory Grove Camp Ground" with information provided by Mrs. Maude Taylor.

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- ³⁶ Typescript sheet at the Montgomery County Historical Society titled "History of Emory Grove M.E. Church," source filed under: Churches: Methodist: Emory Grove.
- ³⁷ Richard Tyler interview by Elizabeth Jo Lampl, March 27, 2004.
- ³⁸ Glen Taylor interview by Elizabeth Jo Lampl, March 29, 2004.
- ³⁹ *Ibid.*
- ⁴⁰ Richard Tyler interview.
- ⁴¹ *Ibid.*
- ⁴² Richard Tyler Interview.
- ⁴³ Website from Marston Memorial Church.
- ⁴⁴ *Golden Anniversary of Free Methodism in Spencerville, Maryland.* Pamphlet in the files of the Montgomery County Historic Preservation Section.
- ⁴⁵ *The Sentinel*, July 20, 1933.
- ⁴⁶ "The Camp Counselor," Issue E, Winter 1996, The MD/VA Conference Free Methodist Campground Cabin Owners' Newsletter, 4.
- ⁴⁷ The search in the *Montgomery Sentinel* records for camp meeting information could not be completely systematic, since certain reels of film would not load properly in the microfilm reader. The first finding of the Spencerville Camp Meeting in 1933 does, however, provide a reasonable reference point for the founding of that camp when combined with information from the church's own archives and the collective memory of its congregants.
- ⁴⁸ *The Sentinel*, June 29, 1933.
- ⁴⁹ *The Sentinel*, July 20, 1933.
- ⁵⁰ The Spencerville Camp Meeting, Maryland Historical Trust Inventory Form, Site 15-74, prepared by William Bushong, December 1994.
- ⁵¹ Bylaws of the Montgomery County Interdenominational Holiness Association of Maryland, June 1933.
- ⁵² *Ibid.*
- ⁵³ *The Sentinel*, August 24, 1933.
- ⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

V. THE CULTURAL LANDSCAPE OF THE CAMP MEETING

Montgomery County's extant camp meeting grounds should be identified as historic vernacular landscapes because they arose out of the hands of local church leaders and laymen, without the benefit of trained designers. The layout of the Montgomery County campgrounds, whether wheel-like or horseshoe, was based on a general knowledge of earlier campground design combined with a feel for the general character and topography of the land. Land-use zones and other aspects of the cultural landscapes of camp meetings are described below, grouped according to topics identified by the National Park Service (NPS). Each of the topics appears in bold and is then defined according to the NPS' Cultural Landscape Bulletins, also in bold. The several aspects of camp meeting cultural landscapes, in general, are described first, followed by the specifics as they pertain to the four well-known Montgomery County camp meetings.

Natural Systems

(The natural aspects that have influenced the development and physical form of a landscape. The following may be included: geomorphology, geology, hydrology, ecology, climate, and native vegetation.)

The most consistent deciding factor for the establishment of a camp meeting was not the beauty of a site or its prospect, but - quite simply - the existence of a stand of trees. With the exception of seaside sites, trees were the essential ingredients of a camp meeting setting, both for shading outdoor services and for the timber they provided for tent poles, cottage framing, and firewood.

All of Montgomery County's camp meetings were located amidst a grove of trees, with oak being the tree most represented. The grove not only had practical purposes, but biblical symbolism, allowing campgoers to feel that the retreat was a true communion with nature. Trees were the "brush arbor pulpits" under which early preachers stood. Trees were the 'architecture' of the early camp meetings, whether they formed a clustered, central grove (such as at Emory Grove and Spencerville), edged cottages (such as at Damascus), or served as a forested setting for the construction of many cottages (such as at Washington Grove).¹ **(Figures V-1 and V-2)**

Most of the camp meeting locations in Montgomery County also depended on a farmer willing to donate a parcel of land for the camp meeting purpose. The earliest advertisements for camp meetings indicate locations such as "Mrs. Hamilton's Grove," or "Beall's Grove." As the various camp meeting associations became established enough to actually purchase these sites, privately owned groves would become known by other names. Thus, "Bowman's Woods" in the unincorporated black community of Emory Grove, would formally become the "Mineral Grove Camp Grounds."

A second crucial natural system for a campground site was water – specifically, a supply of potable water and good drainage. Camp meetings organizers searched potential campsites for water that was both potable and sufficient in supply for cleaning dishes, linens, pots and pans, etc. If they did not find natural springs, the water source was developed as a series of underground wells that were dug either by campgoers or professional well drillers. Another early criterion was that the site should include an area of pasturage for horses.



Figure V-1: Trees lie at the core of the Spencerville Camp Meeting and shelter a children's playground at one end. (Elizabeth Jo Lampl, Montgomery County Historic Preservation Section)



Figure V-2: Trees both line the perimeter road and are found behind the cottages at the Damascus Camp Meeting. (Elizabeth Jo Lampl, Montgomery County Historic Preservation Section)

Specifically, in Montgomery County, supplying and maintaining water was one of the challenges. At Washington Grove, the area was selected for an abundance of springs, but when it came to actually locating the campground, the springs were at a distance. Wells were dug instead and the earliest meeting's site plan, drawn in 1873, shows three pumps, one near each of the roads that bordered the campground, and one in the center area south of most of the tent sites. Water was still being hand pumped until the Grove was electrified in 1914. Standing water also was a problem at Washington Grove. Association leaders had to constantly encourage campgoers to make sure all ditches were drained, for fear of the spread of typhoid or malaria, and for the general goal of keeping both air and water pure and circulating. Most cottages had their own privies, the buckets or boxes of which were emptied daily.²

At Emory Grove, getting enough water out of the hand-operated pump was always a chore. The single well and related water pump were important functional elements of the camp meeting in addition to being a gathering place. When asked about any remaining structures on the Emory Grove camp meeting site, Richard Tyler recalled:

I think the last remnant of that [camp meeting structures] was a pump, the pump that stood right at the entrance where people secured their water, all of the people secured their water during the camp meeting time and continued to be an active community pump for many, many years. People didn't have indoor plumbing, and many of them walked to the campground through the woods, through the path, with two buckets and filled them up at the pump and they would carry that back home. Later on, it became a place to wash your cars under the nice shade of the big oak trees, and it stayed there for many, many, many years and functioned.³

Like Washington Grove, Emory Grove had privies scattered throughout the campsite. At Spencerville, at least one family dug their own water pump, but it was used by many of the campers. At Damascus, adequate potable water was less of a concern. The cesspools that marked the early Montgomery County camp meetings were eventually eliminated at some sites but septic tanks still remain at others. Often, in the 20th century, there was a communal bathhouse that featured both toilets and showers, since cottages did not have their own.

Spatial Organization

(The three dimensional organization of physical forms and visual associations in a landscape. . . . Examples include circulation systems, views and vistas, divisions of property, and topography.)

Cluster Arrangement:

(The location and pattern of buildings and structures in a landscape and associated outdoor spaces. Examples of features associated with a cluster arrangement include village center and complexes, mining, agricultural, and residential buildings and structures. . . .)

Since these two aspects of cultural landscapes are so closely related, they are discussed together in this section.

As the camp meeting became less of a phenomenon and more of a cultural tradition by the 19th century, several Methodist practitioners suggested various layouts for campgrounds, along with basic procedures, regular schedules, "how to" suggestions for cooking and cleaning, and goals

for illumination. Examples of camp meeting manuals include: Jesse Lee's *Short History of Methodists in the USA* (1810), Nathan Bangs' *A History of the Methodist Episcopal Church* (1838-39), and the *Western Christian Advocate* (1839). These and other sources advocated the following spatial plans: 1) a horseshoe, 2) an oblong square, 3) a basic square to symbolize the walls of a meetinghouse, or 4) a circle or series of circles. **(Figure V-3)** Once the main tabernacle geometry was set, campground planners usually made sure to separate vehicular routes from pedestrian paths. Most emphasized pedestrian-oriented circulation. Walkways often serve as many of the community's 'main streets.'

Seaside camp meetings were sometimes more rectilinear. The most popular layout, with an example being that of Ocean Park, Maine, was a rectangular one with streets that ran parallel or perpendicular to the coast. The church or meetinghouse was linked to the shore by a main street and there was typically a common, or green, and sites for post office and grocery. But there were other plans, including that of the horseshoe at Rehoboth Beach, Delaware (alternatively described as "fanlike") or the radial concentric plan at Martha's Vineyard. At Wesleyan Grove on the Vineyard, the plan was that of a series of concentric circles, with streets or walkways that radiated from the circle like spokes on a wheel. Architectural historians also refer to this plan type as "arciform." The Wesleyan Grove plan emerged by 1860 and was formalized on paper by 1868. **(Figure V-4)** Ellen Weiss, author of *City in the Woods: The Life and Design of an American Camp Meeting on Martha's Vineyard*, described the plan's uniqueness: "The development at Wesleyan Grove of even a fragmentarily executed radial concentric plan is of particular interest, for it is a plan type which, with a few notable exceptions such as Washington, D.C. and Detroit, was little used in America."⁴ Weiss goes on to say that the radial, or wheel, plan was visible at a number of campgrounds by the 1870s, including that of Washington Grove in Montgomery County.

Though each camp varied somewhat in its response to the design issues, some aspects of the cultural landscape were standard; namely, that a large tabernacle must be surrounded by a cluster of tents (or cottages) and that special areas be laid aside for: 1) the parking of horses/carriages (later cars), 2) recreation areas, and 3) service buildings, such as stores, hotels, and community kitchens. These last types of buildings were often located on the periphery of campground property.

In a larger framework, the campground itself was a zone apart from all surrounding development. Step foot onto a campground and one immediately senses the separateness. This impression is due to its largely uniform building stock, minimal vehicular traffic, and the omnipresent cluster of trees that buffer it on some of its edges. Inside the campground site, the overwhelming perception is of a fusion of public and private space. Specifically, there is a sacrifice of private space in the name of communal space that reflects the emphasis on the group experience. Lines historically were blurred in the campground cultural landscape as to private and group ownership. Today, some cottage owners have demarcated modest 'front yards' with stones or small bricks, being careful not to tread on what is perceived as public space. **(Figure V-5)**

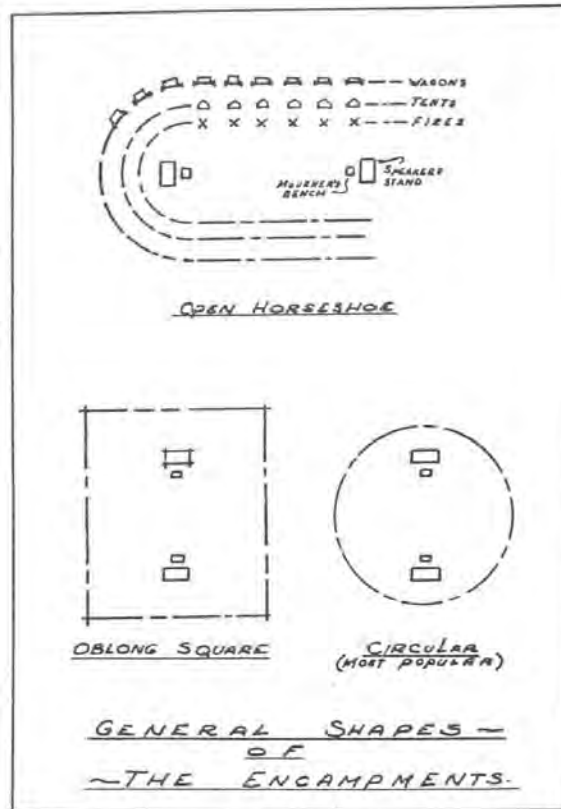


Figure V-3: The various layouts of camp meetings. (Charles A. Johnson, *The Frontier Camp Meeting*)



Figure V-4: The layout of Wesleyan Grove on Martha's Vineyard. Source: (Ellen Weiss, *City in the Woods*)



Figure V-5: Spencerville Cottage showing merger of private and public spaces through creation of small, ordered front yards. (Elizabeth Jo Lampl, Montgomery County Historic Preservation Section)

Proximity of living space is another indicator of the group experience at camp meeting. The cottages, in particular, are sometimes barely a few feet apart. **(Figures V-6 and V-7)** As one camp meeting scholar puts it, “Rather than being an imposition or annoyance, this proximity continues the tradition of exposed communal living that was fundamental to the revival meeting experience.”⁵ The interior of the houses were historically fairly visible to the public as well, as double front doors and second-story façade windows were left open not only to admit the circulating breezes but to indicate openness to passersby. The desire for visibility and its social aspects were also indicated by the porches and second-level balconies found at Washington Grove and Wesleyan Grove.

In Montgomery County, specifically, the radial concentric plan (in evidence at Washington Grove and the National Chautauqua at Glen Echo) and the “horseshoe” (apparent at Spencerville and Damascus) are the types that can be observed in the cultural landscape. There had been an original square layout at Washington Grove, but this short-lived plan was superseded by the radial plan. On Washington Grove’s first plan, the campground proper was 200 feet to a side, lined with benches, and called the “Plaza.”⁶ **(Figure V-8)** The eastern side contained a platform for the preacher. Sites for 258 tents were sited in a rectilinear area in the center, 15’ x 20’ lots for small tents and 15’ x 30’ lots for larger ones. Boarding tents were on the periphery, and outhouses at some distance from the tent sites to the east.



Figure V-6: The proximity of cottages at Wesleyan Grove on Martha's Vineyard is shown in this photograph from the late 19th century. (Weiss, *City in the Woods*)



Figure V-7: The proximity of cottages at Washington Grove in Montgomery County reflects the small, tent-sized lots. (Montgomery County Historic Preservation Section)



Figure V-8: The original Washington Grove site plan of 1873 showing that the central gathering space was a square. Edwards, *Washington Grove, 1873-1937*)



Figure V-9: Plan of Washington Grove from 1886, showing that the tabernacle area had developed on its own into a circle with finger-like streets stretching to the north, a variation on the radial concentric plan. The grid-like plan to the southeast had larger lots for more sizeable houses built from the 1880s on. Edwards, *Washington Grove, 1873-1937*)

By 1874, Washington Grove's radial concentric plan was set, probably influenced by the success of Wesleyan Grove, which had a national reputation. Only 13 tent sites were kept from the original plan, eight on the east side of the "Plaza," behind the speaker's platform and five on the south side. The new layout called for avenues radiating out from a central circle. The August 13, 1875 issue of *The Sentinel* noted of only one complaint, that being "the regulation of the officers of the grounds which compels persons going there in their own vehicles to leave their horses so far away from tenting ground that it requires all their time to attend to their stock and they have no leisure to listen to the preaching."⁷

In 1885, the Washington Grove campground was surveyed by J.C. Lang and subdivided into lots for more tents, cottages, and designated recreational areas. By 1886, a formal subdivision layout had been submitted to the County land records office. **(Figure V-9)** The plan maintained earlier Washington Grove terminology, calling out the different zones for tents and cottages as departments. Many of the blocks were not developed and eventually became parkland.

County Surveyor C.J. Maddox submitted a new subdivision plan in 1897. While the Maddox plan was more uniform than Lang's, it lacked the former's creation of open space. Outside of the circular/radial tabernacle area, the plan was basically a grid with 10-foot-wide alleys laid out behind the cottages. (These were later abandoned and incorporated into the leaseholders' property.) Most of the lots were 50' x 150' feet to accommodate cottages. The older camp meeting area around the tabernacle remained as it had been, with narrower lots and quirkiest streets. Some of the common areas that arose from this plan were the result of lack of sales of some of the lots platted for building purposes.

The price of lots was fixed at a minimum of \$100 for 50-foot-wide lots. Association stockholders could pay for their lots by stock and cash. In exchange for purchasing a lot, the number of the lot and block was written upon the face of the stock and a certificate was awarded stating the amount of stock held and the lot(s) associated with it. The 1909 bylaws of the Association at Washington Grove described how "Tenting and Cottage Departments are laid off with wide and beautifully shaded avenue, and are improved by one hundred and twenty-five Cottages; also an Assembly hall, Auditorium, Athletic Club House, Hotel, Store, and other structures."⁸

Unlike the abundance of historical evidence for Washington Grove, Emory Grove's spatial layout remains undocumented on paper. The plan cannot adequately be characterized, given that no photographs or plans have been found of the campground, to date, and no built structures remain extant. However, some information has been gleaned from oral histories and one piece of physical evidence: There was a main street that led into the camp (which was different than the road that leads back to the Emory Grove Church cemetery) and shelters known as tables were clustered together to the southwest of the road under the grove of trees. The baseball field of the mid-20th century that accompanied the camp meeting was located in the same spot as Johnson Park's softball field of today. That field was to the northwest of where the tabernacle would have been.

Spencerville and Damascus both still feature horseshoe-shaped site plans, but have additional cottages or buildings in rows or partial rings behind the basic horseshoe. **(Figure V-10)** Many of

these buildings are contemporaneous with those of the original horseshoe. Spencerville's tabernacle is at the southern tip of the horseshoe. There are separate zones established for the playground area in the north of the grassy center, a dormitory/retreat at the northeast corner, and a dining hall/caretakers' housing to the east of the grove. The horseshoe at Damascus is anchored on the north side on the tip by the tabernacle and on the south side at the tip by the dining hall (now sanctuary). Whereas Spencerville's horseshoe drive is behind most cottages, Damascus' drive fronts some of the cottages, but leaves the tabernacle at the heart of the landscape area. **(Figure V-11)** Children who attend camp at Damascus often use bicycles to get around the small campground site. **(Figure V-12)**



Figure V-10: The bottom of the horseshoe at Spencerville, where cottages face the back of the tabernacle and the vehicular drive is behind the cottages. (Elizabeth Jo Lampl, Montgomery County Historic Preservation Section)



Figure V-11: The tabernacle at Damascus, at the core near the top of the open U, or horseshoe plan there. (Elizabeth Jo Lampl, Montgomery County Historic Preservation Section).



Figure V-12: Bicycles provide children with a means of getting around the campground at the Damascus Camp Meeting. (Olga Fairfax)

Land Use

(Describes the principal activities in a landscape that form, shape, and organize the landscape as a result of human interaction. Examples of features associated with land use include agricultural fields, pastures, playing fields, and quarries.)

Communal outdoor worship was the activity that determined the cultural landscape of a campground. The first order of business was to clear about a half-acre for worship, whether that ground was to be the oblong square, rectangle, circle, or a horseshoe, as already described. The preacher's stand was typically located at the northern end of the worship area, so that sun would not be in the eyes of the participants.

Overnight stays, whether permanent or temporary, were the second activity that determined land use. Much thought went into how the residences were paid for and how the land upon which they sat was either rented or leased. In Washington Grove, in particular, regulation of this land use was changed numerous times. Beginning in the mid-1880s, the Washington Grove Association moved to a system of taxing lots and their improvements as opposed to having campgoers own stock and leasing improved lots to owners. By 1888, a system of leases had been adopted, entitling holders to own not more than one lot in each department.

Emory Grove had a simpler and meaningful way of tying the equivalent of one's residence or table to the land. It assigned each family its very own oak tree, which also served as the support for electrical wiring. Damascus and Spencerville dwellings were sold to interested parties or owned by the churches associated with the camp meeting.

Passive and active recreation comprised the third activity that determined land use. Open space, both at the heart of the campground and anywhere else that it could be claimed, was especially important for the group experience that characterized a camp meeting. In Washington Grove, over 50% of the land in the Town is still used for open space and owned by the municipality. The bylaws, dated 1909, designated a committee on Athletics, whose charge it was to “encourage and foster a clean and healthful games and sports on our grounds...any so-called sport or game that is not of good moral tone shall not be permitted and must cease immediately. The committee shall have supervision of the public fields and playgrounds”⁹

Emory Grove had a thriving tradition of baseball, in the same general area, but not conflicting with its camp meeting schedule.

Spencerville also had regulations concerning its recreational areas. Its General Rules required that sports activities take place “only in areas so designated.”¹⁰ As mentioned, Spencerville had a playground where children would play horseshoes, swing, and seesaw, all within viewing distance of parents’ cottages.

Cultural Traditions:

(The practices that influence the development of a landscape in terms of land use, patterns of land division, building forms, stylistic preferences, and the use of materials.)

The camp meeting tradition in Montgomery County primarily stems from the Methodist practice of evangelizing in the woods. It was primarily a desire for religious rekindling that led to the land uses associated with the camp meeting. The Carpenter Gothic architecture in the more permanent of the communities (such as Washington Grove) reflects church-like aspirations for buildings comprising a camp meeting. Carpenter Gothic, the term used to denote the 19th-century application of Gothic motifs by artisan-builders in wood, was the common form of the Gothic style. Alexander Jackson Davis and Andrew Jackson Downing popularized the Gothic style in America in the early-to-mid 19th century as part of the broader Picturesque Movement, which was a revival of the elaborateness and craftsmanship of medieval times. Culturally, the Gothic style at Washington Grove reflects the ample resources of late 19th-century Washington’s upper middle class. On the other hand, the straightforwardness of the architecture at Damascus and Spencerville manifests the honest use of materials and the more limited financial means of Depression-era campgoers and upcounty farming families.

Besides religious motivations, some of the camp meetings stem from the excursionist practice that characterized all large metropolitan places. The 1909 charter for the incorporation of the camp meeting at Washington Grove indicated as much: “Whereas certain ministers and laymen of the Methodist Episcopal Church in the District of Columbia and in Maryland have associated themselves together for the purpose of forming a Camp-meeting and Excursion Association...”¹¹ Washington Grove’s links to the Baltimore & Ohio (B&O) railroad are further evidence of the excursionist trend.

Finally, the practices of recreation and entertainment also factored into how the land at camp meetings was ultimately laid out. At Washington Grove, previously farmed fields were allowed to go fallow for baseball fields in the 1890s. Around the same time, Washington Grove also set aside land for tennis courts, which culminated by the early 20th century in at least 20 courts

dispersed about the community. Croquet and roque (the hard-court version of croquet) also were popular. At Emory Grove, baseball arrived in the 1940s via Edward Johnson. Nighttime entertainment was offered at the Du-Drop Inn starting in 1947 on the grounds adjacent to the campground, but did not conflict with the camp's schedule. Spencerville and Damascus kept recreation to a quiet level, allowing for play areas but no major sports.

Circulation:

The spaces, features, and applied material finishes that constitute the systems of movement in a landscape. Examples of features associated with circulation include paths, sidewalks, roads, and canals.

Circulation needs were carefully thought out by camp meeting planners, both at the vehicular (horse-drawn and motor) and pedestrian level, especially with regard to women and children. In Washington Grove, a wide path was cleared from the train depot to the campground in 1873. This path would eventually become Grove Avenue, one of the major entry points to the campground and its primary thoroughfare. Within the camp, there was a distinction between paths for pedestrians (located primarily on the interior) and those for horses and carriages (located on the outskirts). The smaller streets were laid out in a north/south grid and initially were named for the churches that were affiliated with the camp meeting: Foundry, Wesley, McKendree, Hamlin, Dumbarton, and Metropolitan. (These street names, however, were never used.) It is probable that groups from certain churches were clustered together near the streets named after their church. While some were paved in the 1890s, most of the roads in Washington Grove were not paved until 1927.

At first, the streets in the heart of Washington Grove were lit by kerosene lamps and cottages were lit by candle or kerosene. Gas lamps were installed along the streets in Washington Grove in 1890, but the high price of gas made the Association revert to kerosene again by 1895. A patented gas lamp sold by one of the Grove's residents allowed the Association to pay a fee for gas lighting once again, and gas remained the Grove's circulatory lighting well beyond the period when electricity was introduced to the metropolitan area. Only in 1914 did Washington Grove receive electric lights.

At Emory Grove, the main road led into the meeting from the Laytonsville Road and there were no other roads, simply well worn paths.

In Spencerville, a rule states that cars are strictly prohibited from anywhere inside the landscape zone defined by the Camp Road, except where clearly posted. This established the central lawn area as a car-free zone. The streets and fields were named in honor of the early landowners, association founders, presiding elders, and preachers. In Damascus, vehicles and pedestrians share the camp road, but again, there are rules to prevent pedestrian and vehicular entanglements.

Topography:

The three-dimensional configuration of a landscape surface characterized by features (such as slope and articulation) and orientation (such as elevation and solar aspect). Examples of features associated with topography include earthworks, drainage ditches, knolls, and terraces.

As with all campgrounds intended to be a respite from the city, a high elevation was considered an advantage, but not a prerequisite for camp meetings. A Washington Grove brochure from

1879 noted that the campground was “515 feet above sea level, as high as the Washington Monument – absolutely free from malaria and mosquitoes.” The Washington Grove site was centered on the highest point of the wooded grove. Damascus sits along a small slope at the edge of the Catoctin Mountains. **(Figure V-13)** The other Montgomery County campgrounds are not known for any particular aspect of topography. Their sites were chosen, in fact, because they had proximity to the religious community they were serving (Emory Grove, Damascus, Spencerville) and/or were accessible by train (Washington Grove, Emory Grove).

Vegetation:

The deciduous and evergreen trees, shrubs, vines, ground covers and herbaceous plants, and plant communities, whether indigenous or introduced into a landscape. Examples of features associated with vegetation include specimen trees, allees, woodlots, orchards, and perennial gardens.

The grove is the primary vegetative feature that ties all of the Montgomery County camp meetings together. All of the four camp meetings feature mature, primarily deciduous trees, and, in each case, participants work to protect those trees as part of a natural tabernacle. At all the camp meetings, the trees were treated with great reverence. In Washington Grove, for example, the by-laws of 1909 carried a prohibition against hurting trees: “The trees on the grounds of the Association shall not be injured, threshed, cut down or destroyed by any person, except upon the authority of the Trustees.” The Grove had a policy of only removing enough trees from a walkway to make a straight path.

The trees in Washington Grove are those of a hardwood forest, and include red oak, white oak, maple, cedar, hickory, and pine. The grove also used to feature elms and American chestnuts, until the Chestnut Blight appeared via an exotic fungus that had been accidentally introduced in New York City in 1904. A virus that spread in the 1930s killed off the elms at a slower, but nonetheless deadly pace. More recently, dogwood blight has been killing off mature trees that line the walkways. Washington Grove is a designated Bird Sanctuary and home to deer, raccoons, and foxes.

In Emory Grove, the trees that remain from the original groves are the willow oaks.

In Spencerville, the trees in the Grove include White oak, Pin oak, Red oak, Tulip poplar, Hickory, Pine, and Dogwoods. In addition, Spencerville’s grove supports a range of wildlife, including deer, groundhogs, foxes, hawks, eagles, bluebirds, woodpeckers, swallows, bats, and many other songbirds. Damascus’ hardwood stock is similar.



Figure V-13: The Damascus Camp Meeting is tucked into a small slope at the start of the Catoctin foothills. (Elizabeth Jo Lampl, Montgomery County Historic Preservation Section)

Other vegetative qualities of the camp meetings depended upon the tastes of the tent and cottage dwellers. In Washington Grove, it was reported: “In the very early Camp Meeting days attempts were made to beautify the tent abodes with wild flowers, ferns and autumn leaves. Then little flower beds, rookeries and flower boxes were added. Our recollection is that Mrs. Mary Knott . . . was the first to plant shrubs, trees and flowers for perpetual ornamentation. She was followed by a Mr. Benson. . . . Here he did some intensive gardening . . . practically every inch of his small lot was given up to flowers, plants and even vegetables. Mrs. Read . . . early planted shrubbery and cultivated flowers to the great adornment of her home. Among the pioneers in floriculture were Judge Hardan, Clifford V. Sparrow and Mr. Hunt. . . . After the last named was succeeded by Mr. Hile the cultivation of fruits and flowers went on apace.”¹²

Buildings and Structures:

Buildings are elements constructed primarily for sheltering any form of human activity in a landscape. Structures are elements constructed for functional purposes other than sheltering human activity in a landscape. Engineering systems are also structures.

See Vernacular Architecture section below.

Views and Vistas:

The prospect created by a range of vision in a landscape, conferred by the composition of other landscape characteristics and associated features. Views are the expansive or panoramic prospect of a broad range of vision, which may be naturally occurring or deliberately contrived. Vistas are the controlled prospect of a discrete linear range of vision, which is deliberately contrived.

Sometimes views were to be had outside of the camp meeting, as is the case at Damascus and the Sugarloaf Mountain. Vistas, on the other hand, always were a distinct part of the camp meeting experience. At least one architectural historian has developed a theory that the layout of camp meetings was used to control vistas and thereby reinforce the power and structure of the religious experience. (See “The Gazes of Hierarchy at Religious Camp Meetings, 1850-1925,” in *People, Power, Places: Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture*, VIII, Chapter 8.)

In general, the tabernacle was the focal point of all of the campgrounds that survive. It was prominent either via carefully laid out lines of sight or due to its location closest to the campground entry point.

Constructed Water Features:

The built features and elements that use water for aesthetic or utilitarian functions in a landscape. Examples of features associated with constructed water features include foundations, canals, cascades, pools, and reservoirs.

Washington Grove had a natural spring that was a destination for excursionists. In addition, an ice pond was constructed at the spring and later used as a swimming pond. Today, it is known as Maple Lake. Emory Grove had the mineral springs, which appear to have been on the east side of the Laytonsville Road, but their exact location is not known. A drive through the community today and discussions with county planners reveal that, other than a tiny wetlands area, there are no springs to speak of.

Small-Scale Features:

The elements providing detail and diversity of both functional needs and aesthetic concerns in a landscape. Examples of small-scale features include fences, benches, monuments, signs, and road markers.

Several of the campgrounds featured fencing in their history, but not much else by way of small-scale landscape features. The first two camp meeting seasons at Washington Grove did not include fencing, but the misuse of alcohol by some campers and others in the 1874 season caused the Association to construct a perimeter post-and-rail fence in time for the opening of the 1875 season. The August 5, 1875 *Sentinel* reported on its construction: “The only fault which our county people have with the arrangements made this year, is the inaccessibility to the tenting grounds with their carriages on account of the post and rail fence erected around the grounds, but those entrusted with the fitting up things, which, or course, makes it very inconvenient for those who visit to spend a day in the grove, and who expect to use their carriages as a rendezvous.”¹³ By 1876, the fence idea remained intact, but the structure itself was rebuilt with chestnut boards.

Archeological Sites:

The ruins, traces, or deposited artifacts in a landscape, evidenced by the presence of either surface or subsurface features. Examples of features associated with archaeological resources include road traces, structural ruins, irrigation system ruins, and reforested fields.

There are no known archeological sites associated with the Montgomery County campgrounds.

NOTES

¹ Ellen Weiss in *City in the Woods*, writes about this early on in her book.

² In a typical example of job discrimination and the few jobs open to blacks, the emptying of the privies boxes and buckets at Washington Grove was not done by the white cottage owners, but by an African-American man from nearby Emory Grove. See Edwards, *Washington Grove*, 132.

³ Oral History Interview with Richard Tyler by Elizabeth Jo Lampl, "The Camp Meetings of Montgomery County, Oral History Project," March 27, 2004, p. 16.

⁴ Weiss, *City in the Woods*, 38.

⁵ Elizabeth B. Leavy, University of California, Berkeley, review of Ellen Weiss' *City in the Woods*. Review appeared in the Vernacular Architecture Newsletter 95 (Spring 2003), 19-21.

⁶ Most of the information on Washington Grove comes from Philip K. Edwards, *Washington Grove, 1873-1937;: A History of the Washington Grove Camp Meeting Association*," December 1988.

⁷ *The Sentinel*, August 13, 1875.

⁸ "Charter By-Laws and Regulations of the Washington Grove Association of the District of Columbia and Maryland," Washington, D.C. (Washington, D.C.: Geo. E. Howard Press, 1909), Preface.

⁹ By-Laws, 1909, 38.

¹⁰ "General Rules of the Free Methodist Camp and Retreat Center, Spencerville, Maryland," May 1995.

¹¹ Bylaws of Washington Grove, 1909.

¹² Recollections of Page Milburn of Washington Grove, 11. Files of the Montgomery County Historic Preservation Section.

¹³ *The Sentinel*, August 5, 1875.

VI. THE VERNACULAR ARCHITECTURE OF THE CAMP MEETING

The vernacular architecture of the camp meeting constitutes a distinct iconography and can be classified into building typologies. Sadly, much is gone, and what remains is almost always threatened by lack of funding and resulting low maintenance.

Some of the earliest forms of vernacular architecture at camp meetings were indeed evanescent structures. The first brush arbors, for example, were made from boughs, grass, and felled trees. Other early pulpits were made of wagon beds or a platform of wood on stilts. Still more generous pulpits could be up to ten-feet square in size and have a roof large enough to shelter a variety of preachers and exhorters. The preacher was typically elevated upon a stand some five- to six-and-a-half feet above floor level in the center, accessed via a flight of steps. As for the audience, the original unsheltered, backless benches either were just logs, laid cross-wise, or sawn timbers placed upon tree stumps.

What remain into the 21st century are the structures from the mid- to late-19th century and early 20th centuries: the cottages, tabernacles, dining halls, and dormitories of the second through fourth periods of camp meeting development. These built structures accommodated four categories of visitors: cottage owners, tent and cottage tenants, hotel guests, and excursionists. Charles Parker, in his article “The Camp Meeting on the Frontier,” in *Methodist History* magazine, described these classes as follows:

Some cottage owners, largely preachers, lawyers, and businessmen spent the entire summer on the grounds. Many of them regarded the well-regulated and strongly protected religious resort as an ideal place to leave their families during the summer, while they attended matters elsewhere, spending only weekends at the cottages. Some even commuted to and from the city daily. Other vacationers rented cottages from the camp meeting associations at reasonable rates, thus gaining the same benefits as those who owned cottages. Shorter-term visitors were usually accommodated at hotels and boarding houses, which sprang up soon after the establishment of the camp meeting ground. They crowded these places to capacity throughout the summer season. Large numbers of excursionists also were drawn to the grounds, especially during the camp meeting services. Most of them wandered around the grounds, partaking of the religious or recreational amenities, but having no specific headquarters.¹

Tents

The earliest camp meeting attendees pitched tents in order to stay on the grounds and fully participate in the religious revival. The late-18th/early-19th century tents were fashioned out of cotton or sailcloth, even quilts or sheets from bedding. Straw or hay was spread over the dirt floor beneath the tent. Front flaps were pulled back during the day to provide light and ventilation. Camp meeting manuals, such as Rev. B.W. Gorham’s of 1845, even described the ideal dimensions and structural framing of a canvas tent. (**Figure VI-1**) For the most part, the earliest tents were straightforward shelters.

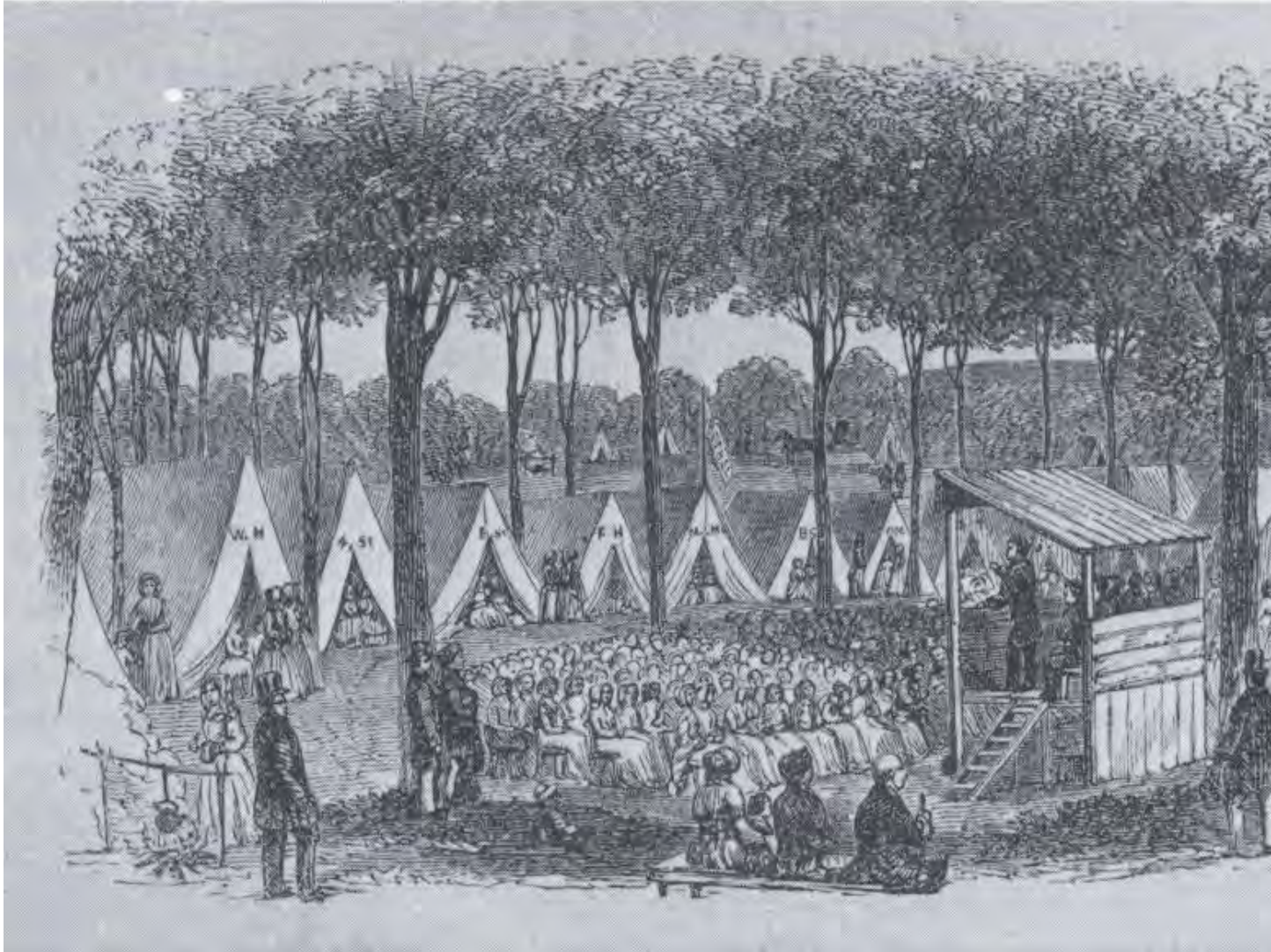


Figure VI-1: Simple tents were the preferred campground shelter according to Rev. B.W. Gorham in his 1854 publication, *Camp Meeting Manual*. (Ellen Weiss, *City in the Woods*)

Later photographs show that people sometimes used scalloped edging, striped porch awnings, and/or decorated their tents with banners to embellish the otherwise plain structures. Martha's Vineyard tents had elaborate designs. **(Figures VI-2 and VI-3)** And, at Ocean Grove, New Jersey, the tents were canvas in front (with a striped porch awning) and featured an attached wooden shed at the rear for cooking. One hundred of these tents still survive today and have been detailed in an isometric drawing from Lester Walker's book *Tiny Tiny Houses*. **(Figures VI-4 and VI-5)**



Figure VI-2: Elaborately decorated tent at Wesleyan Grove on Martha's Vineyard, photographed in the 1870s. (Weiss, *City in the Woods*)



Figure VI-3: Decorated tent at Wesleyan Grove on Martha's Vineyard, also showing the extent to which the interior of tents were revealed to passersby. Photographed in the 1870s. (Weiss, *City in the Woods*)



Figure VI-4: More decorative, striped awning canvas tents (with wooden rear sheds) at Ocean Grove, New Jersey. Ocean Grove was created in 1868 after the model set at Wesleyan Grove. (Lester Walker, *Tiny, Tiny Houses*)

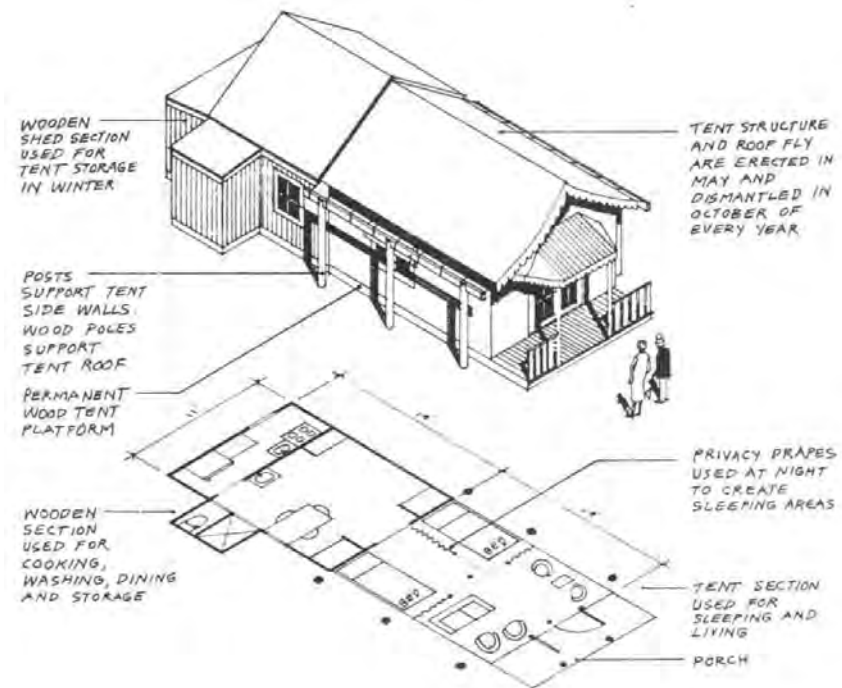


Figure VI-5: Isometric drawing of the tent and attached wooden structure at Ocean Grove, New Jersey. (Lester Walker, *Tiny Tiny Houses*)

African Americans, for the most part, had the same, simple tents at their camp meetings in the late 19th/early 20th centuries, as drawn by Richard Tyler based on his relatives' descriptions of their tents. (**Refer to Section IV**). In some cases, African Americans had a more colorful vernacular tent architecture at early camp meetings. Since slaves were brought to camp to handle cooking and all aspects of manual labor, they too stayed overnight at the early meetings. At least one article on the subject of camp meeting tents references a statement by an observer of an early meeting of the "crazy-quilt tents" of the slaves that "added a colorful dimension" to the scene.²

There also were society tents for large institutional or church groups, "boarding tents" (or "boarding saloons") for groups of people not having their own, individual tents, "eating tents" for those that wanted to eat together, "preachers' tents" and "meeting tents," where assemblies and services were held, sometimes in inclement weather.

Several of the camp meetings of the 19th century featured a combination of wood structure and canvas tenting. The huge camp meeting at West Branch, in Clinton County, Pennsylvania, was one example. (**Figure VI-6**) While West Branch appears quite stately in the lithograph, some of the campground board tents were criticized for their less-than-holy atmosphere. One of the critics was the Reverend B.W. Gorham, whose 1854 book, *Camp Meeting Manual, A Practical Book for the CampGround*, advocated banning such structures and continuing with the purportedly more well-lit and breathable cloth tents. Of wooden structures, Gorham stated: "Their appearance is calculated to excite a class of low and ludicrous ideas since they give a spectator rather the idea of a huddle of Irish rail-road shanties, than of a worshipping people." Gorham's manual was highly instructive to campground planners, however, as it focused on the specifics of site selection, the preacher's stand and other fixtures, the dimensions and framing for cloth tents, and all other "requisites for a good camp meeting."³

Historical accounts and oral histories provide information on the tents at Washington and Emory Groves. The first tents rented by the Washington Grove Camp Meeting Association came from two Washington, D.C. suppliers.⁴ The 1873 *Sentinel* reported that forty men were engaged framing up 155 tents for canvas covering. It also reported that the Washington Grove Association was "erecting booths" and "digging wells" to get ready for camp meeting.⁵ There were several years in the late 1870s and throughout the 1880s when tents and cottages co-existed there, according to a longtime campgoer. "The founders of Washington Grove had no idea of establishing anything more than a periodic tent village. . . . It was soon found that Washington Grove was a healthful place in which to spend the hot days of summer. At first families came a week or two before Camp and remained a while after the Camp closed. Tents were found to be inconvenient for these protracted stays."⁶

The canvas tents at Emory Grove were simple and unadorned. They were utilitarian shelters held up by wooden poles staked into the ground. They featured air flaps on the sidewalls and the front flaps that were tied back for entry. Spencerville and Damascus had very short-lived tenting days, with cottages being built soon after the campgrounds opened in 1931. It is said that the tents at Spencerville in the early 1930s were obtained from Fort Meade, near Columbia, Maryland. Nothing is known of Damascus' particular tents.

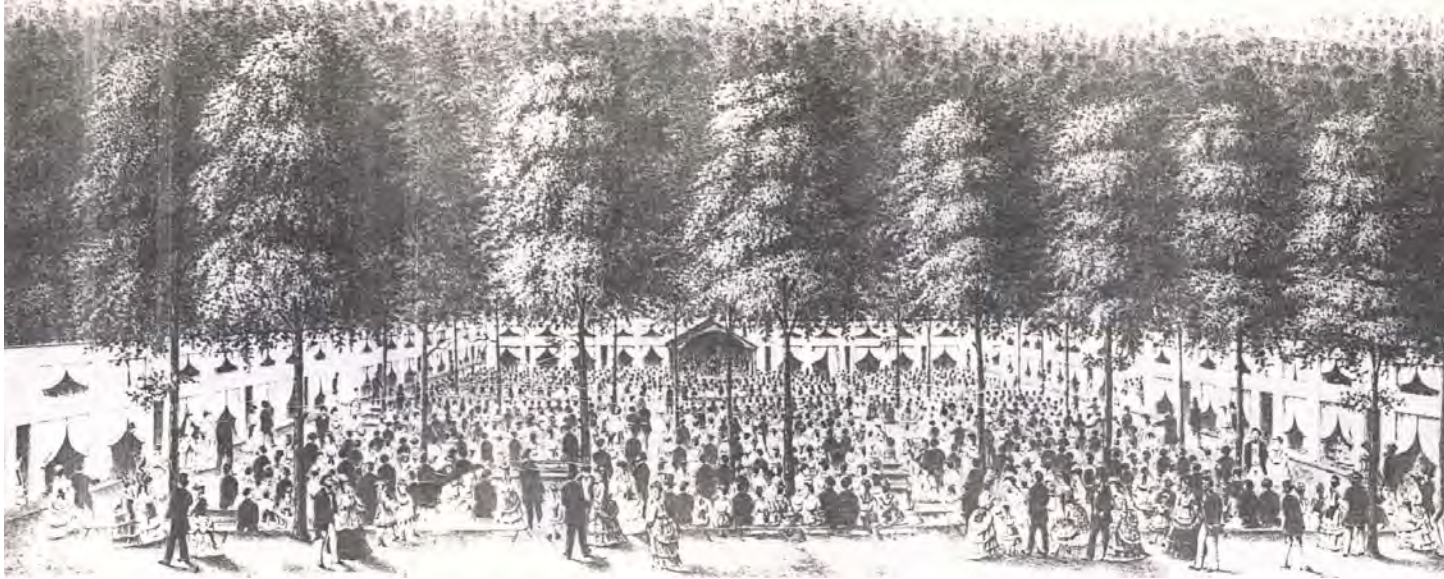


Figure VI-6: West Branch Camp Meeting in Clinton County, Pennsylvania, where framed structures were combined with canvas tent flaps in the second half of the 19th century. (Library of Congress)

Cottages

Tents were replaced by cottages in the post-Civil War period, although they were not always called cottages. In fact, a source of confusion in studying the camp meeting movement is that the term tent was still used when the first wood structures were built. The more permanent “tents” reflect not only a lingering fondness for the days when meetings really involved camping, but also the use of camp-meeting vernacular language (which would also include the term “backsliders,” or people who had a tendency to lapse in their spiritual pursuits).

Page Milburn’s account of Washington Grove’s construction history illustrates the lingering and confusing use of the term tent for more permanent structures:

Major Thomas P. Morgan erected the first wooden tent on the Circle, covering it with canvas, which was painted with waterproof paint. But it was found that this roof was not waterproof. After the first season it leaked like a sieve. Umbrellas were frequently used at night as a bed cover when it rained. Then shingles took the place of cotton duck. One after the other was built on the Circle and the different avenues.⁷

Another source described how “wooden tents soon replaced leaky canvas ones” at Washington Grove. It is believed that the first so-called “tents” (really cottages) used canvas roofs not because of any sentimentality surrounding the use of canvas, but because canvas was cheaper than shingles.

In response to the criticism of the ‘unholy’ wooden cabin, a new building type evolved, which was a more highly evolved camp-meeting cottage. The makeshift nature of the earlier buildings was replaced by a cohesive style--the Gothic Revival or its more builder-oriented version, the

Carpenter Gothic. (One can also find examples of Italianate cottages or hybrid Gothic-Italianate cottages sprinkled throughout campgrounds. These cottages have round-arched windows, as opposed to the Gothic's more pointed windows.) The Gothic-inspired cottages provided the religious symbolism needed to transport participants from their earthly cares and while the popularity of the Gothic Revival style peaked in the 1850s, it remained prevalent in campgrounds through the 1880s. **(Figures VI-7 and VI-8)** The cottages resemble churches with their double-door entrances, pointed-arch windows, steeple-like finials, and lacy trim. Like a church, their interiors feature a large communal space, with sleeping areas relegated to an upper loft or second floor. The Gothic Revival mode was a unifying theme that added coherence to the community and gave it an ethereal atmosphere.

By 1859, the camp meeting cottage as vernacular Gothic Revival architecture was in place at Wesleyan Grove on Martha's Vineyard.⁸ William Pierson, architectural historian, noted of Martha's Vineyard that: "It has been shown that the houses which replaced [the tents] during the late 1860s were influenced in part by the elaborate and ornamental canvas structures which once made up the community."⁹ Of fifty extant camp meetings identified by Clare Lise Kelly of the Montgomery County Historic Preservation Section, approximately ¾ of them have cottages dating to the third quarter of the nineteenth century. In almost all situations, the cottages are packed closely together; in rare situations, such as the case at Tucker's Grove and Rock Springs Camp Meetings in North Carolina, they actually share party walls.¹⁰

There appear to be two main sub-types of the camp-meeting cottage: the one- to one-and-a-half story, front-gable structure with a one-story porch or unsheltered veranda, and a two- to two-and-a-half-story structure with front-gable roof overhanging a two-story porch. In Montgomery County, the shorter form predominates. However, there is one of the taller types in Washington Grove and one also, without a full two-story porch, in Spencerville.

A key element of the camp meeting cottage was the inclusion of a front porch. Sometimes uncovered (such as at Wesleyan Grove), but often covered (such as at Washington Grove), the porch was so constantly in use that it was considered a "front room" of the house, leading to yet another confusion in historical descriptions of camp meeting architecture. **(Figures VI-9 and VI-10)** The following example from a WPA guide, describing the Delmarva Camp in Delaware, proves the point: "The early tents have been replaced by comfortable frame tents that each have a front room without a front wall, another room behind it, a kitchen shed in the rear, sleeping rooms above, and fancy jigsaw decorations."¹¹



Figure VI-7: Camp meeting cottage with Italianate-influenced round-arch windows and doors at Wesleyan Grove. (Weiss, *City in the Woods*)



Figure VI-8: The simpler, but pointed style of the cottages at Washington Grove in Montgomery County. (Montgomery County Historic Preservation Section files)



Figure VI-9: The basically uncovered porches of Wesleyan Grove on Martha's Vineyard, covered only partially by the balconies of the second story. (Weiss, *City in the Woods*)



Figure VI-10: A row of porches at Spencerville Camp Meeting. (Elizabeth Jo Lampl, Montgomery County Historic Preservation Section)

Soon after the development of the locally designed and built camp-meeting cottage, manufacturers began offering prefabricated camp-meeting cottages for mass markets. The post-Civil War period, in general, was a time when whole buildings could be ordered via mail, as well as building parts. Ready-made parts, including doors, windows, hardware, cupboards, and jigsawed scrollwork and balusters, all were available from various manufacturers. Some individuals marketed directly to the camp meeting audience. Col. Al Derrom, a New York architect, had patented a ready-made house by 1876, which he advertised as “particularly adapted for Camp Grounds.” A.J. Bicknell authored *Detail, Cottage and Constructive Architecture* in 1873, which featured Gothic Revival, Stick Style, and Second Empire cottages. **(Figure VI-11)** Some of the pattern books offered “portable houses” for “summering.”¹² Examples of prefabricated cottages can be found at Fair Point (later called Chautauqua) New York; Washington Grove, Maryland; and Wesleyan Grove, Massachusetts.

With regard to Montgomery County, the earliest cottages at Washington Grove were built in the late 1870s in the Late Gothic Revival, or “Early Methodist” style. Their architecture was described in *Washington Grove*:

The cottages themselves were simple structures: wooden platforms on low pillars, exterior walls with just enough 2x3 or 2x4 studs to keep the exterior skin of wood panel together, with high-pitched gable roofs sometimes joining at a ridgepole and sometimes not (relying in the latter case on the roof sheathing to hold the roofline true), with occasional stringers high across the rafter to keep the roof from pushing the side walls out under a load of snow (though the steepness of the roof made this less a concern than in more conventional designs). The cottages were remarkably uniform though they came with a choice of dimensions: 14 x 20, 14 x 25, 14 x 30, or ... 14 x 40. The element of individuality was achieved by the selection of door and window styles, and the gingerbread trim, rather than by the shapes or exterior dimensions of the cottages.¹³

The cottages were sometimes named, as was the case with Rev. William Burris, who built one called the “Pioneer.” Some of the wooden structures on the Circle and Avenues radiating from it were said to have been moved to the Cottage Department and enlarged during the process.¹⁴ By 1885, there were 8 large cottages and 60 small ones. Those put up by the Association could be rented for anywhere from \$30 to \$125 for the season. By August of 1889, *The Sentinel* reported that there were one hundred and thirty cottages on the grounds.

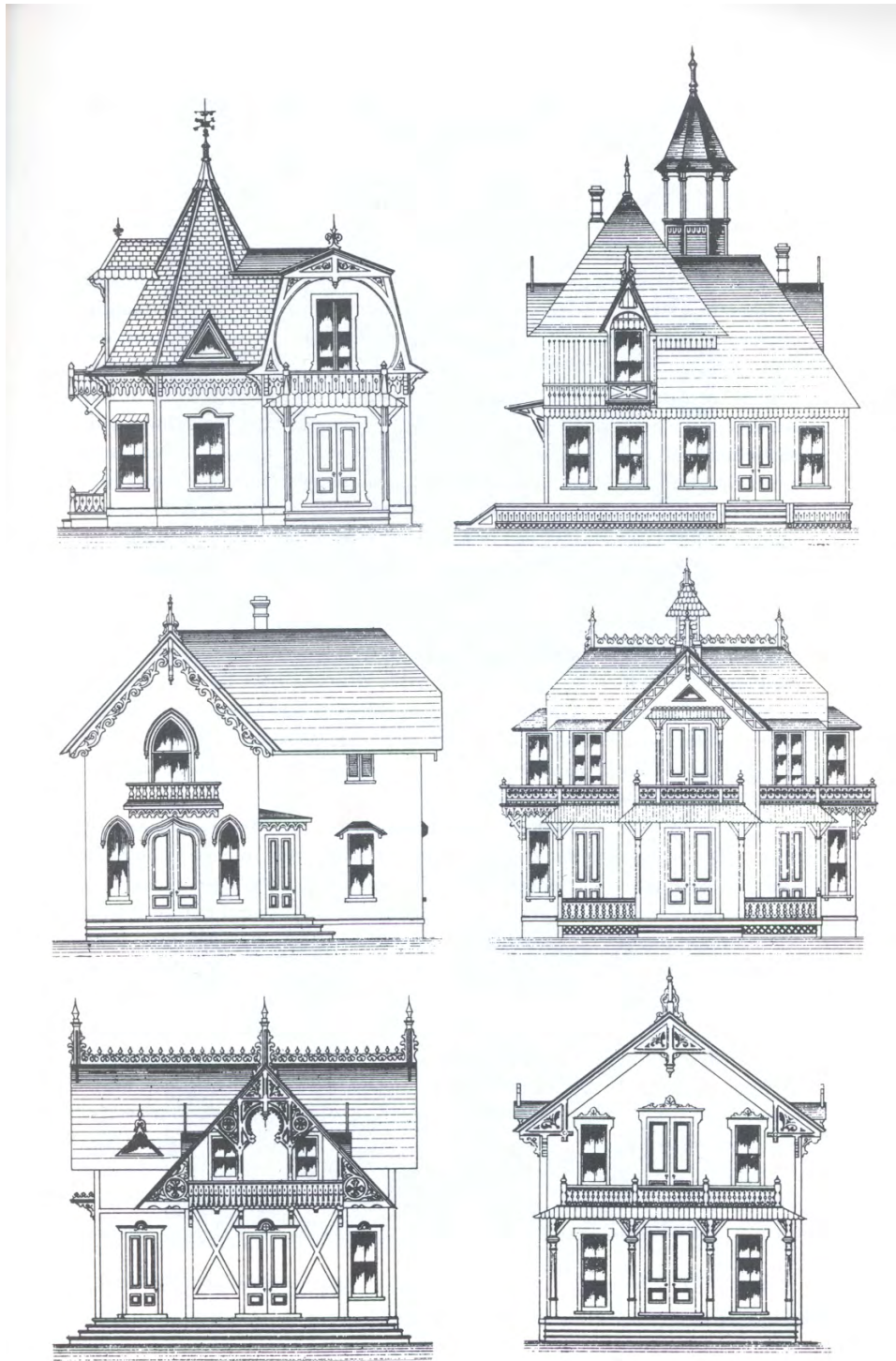


Figure VI-11: Cottage designs by A.J. Bicknell, 1873. (Weiss, *City in the Woods*)

The Building Regulations included in Washington Grove's 1909 By-Laws stated that the front wall of the cottages ("in the cottage department") had to maintain a setback of 20 feet from the building line, but the front porch could extend eight feet into said 20 feet. By 1909, the By-Laws stated that all cottages had to have brick chimneys "or other suitable material" and that "smoke pipes" stuck through walls or roofs were specifically disallowed. Problems with fire presumably had led to this regulation.

Many of the cottages have been expanded over the years due to the small scale of the original cottages. A few are composed of more than one cottage, as at 'Little Acorn,' on Acorn Lane. Washington Grove was designated as a National Register Historic District in 1979.

In Emory Grove, cottages were not built, but shelters known as tables were. See separate discussion of tables below.

In Spencerville, approximately 45 cottages still stand. They are simple frame dwellings with end-gable positioning and front porches (**Figure VI-12**). All but two are single-family, one-room, one-story cottage. The exceptions are two structures, both originally built for two families (one being two stories tall and the other simply wider and one-story). Many still feature original materials, which, for the older cottages means vertical, beaded tongue-and-groove boards and for others are hexagonal asphalt shingle (**Figure VI-13**). Most have asphalt shingle roofs and original or early windows. Most have simple glass windows, but a few feature screened window openings covered with wooden shutters. (**Figures VI-14 and VI-15**) The cottages are privately owned, either by individuals or by churches, and are sold for modest amounts. Owners are responsible for paying ground rent. In 1995, for example, ground rent for a lot cost \$50 annually. The money is used to support maintenance of the campground.

At the Damascus camp meeting, the single-story, single- or double-room, side-gable cottages rest on cinderblock piers and have Masonite siding, asphalt shingle roofing, and a small front porch created by the area underneath the extension of the gable roof over the front wall plane with its pair of wooden posts. (**Figure VI-16**) The single-room cottages have one door and the double cottages, two. (**Figure VI-17**) Most single-room cottages have two windows, each being a six-over-six, double-hung sash unit. Some of the cottages have received artificial (vinyl or aluminum) siding as part of a program to maintain the structures (**Figures VI-18**). The interiors are unadorned, with no paneling or insulation. (**Figure VI-19**) A newspaper story from *The Washington Post* on August 13, 1987, implied that at least some of the cottages were purpose built as air warden cottages from World War II: "He [Dr Clayton S. Luce] ran the show for years, hauled World War II air warden cottages from Conowingo Dam in Northern Maryland and an old school bus body from Georgia, which now serves as the campground candy store."¹⁵

At Spencerville, the decline in the value of camp meeting real estate means that most sell for quite a small amount of money (in the hundreds) when one considers residential real estate values today.



Figure VI-12: A ‘restored’ cottage in Spencerville, which is now well maintained, thanks to a pair of hardworking individuals. The original beadboard has been overlaid with T-111, and the unadorned wood posts have been replaced with the jigsawn type. The Victorian-style screened door is new. (Elizabeth Jo Lampl, Montgomery County Historic Preservation Section)



Figure VI-13: Asphalt shingle cottages that could date from the 1930s to the 1950s at Spencerville. (Elizabeth Jo Lampl, Montgomery County Historic Preservation Section)



Figure VI-14: A pair of casement windows on a cottage in Spencerville. (Elizabeth Jo Lampl, Montgomery County Historic Preservation Section)



Figure VI-15: Interior of Spencerville cottage showing shuttered and screened window openings, with operable shutters hinged at the top. (Elizabeth Jo Lampl, Montgomery County Historic Preservation Section)



Figure VI-16: Typical Damascus camp meeting cottage walled in Masonite. (Elizabeth Jo Lampl, Montgomery County Historic Preservation Section)



Figure VI-17: A double-sized unit at Damascus Camp Meeting that serves as the bookstore. (Elizabeth Jo Lampl, Montgomery County Historic Preservation Section)



Figure VI-18: Damascus cottages re-sided in vinyl or aluminum, with new asphalt shingle roofs and new wood posts and decks. Several of the cottages have been maintained in this fashion. (Elizabeth Jo Lampl, Montgomery County Historic Preservation Section)



Figure VI-19: Typical Damascus cottage interior with mattress, small table, and chair. Walls are framed in 2x4s with Masonite siding. (Elizabeth Jo Lampl, Montgomery County Historic Preservation Section)

Tables

Emory Grove was unique in Montgomery County for not having cottages, but structural shelters known as tables. The evolution from tents to tables is an interesting story of the integral role that food played at Emory Grove. The Emory Grove tables were used in the 20th century when the campgoers made the Emory Grove trip by day, and did not need shelter at night. They were a perfect hybrid of a picnic shelter/homemade restaurant. As Richard Tyler recalled in his oral history interview: "...people had a reputation for having expertise in certain foods."¹⁶ The impetus for tables as they evolved from tents is told by Tyler when he narrated a drawing he made of both Emory Grove's tents and tables (**Refer to Figure IV-19**):

This is the type of tent that my parents spoke of. I never saw anything like this, but it was a canvas tent with an opening in the front with flaps swinging out and of course ropes and stakes driven into the ground to hold it up.... And they were always beside a designated oak tree. Everyone had their tree and they'd come back every year and be beside that same tree. And this, as I said, was just for sleeping facilities. And of course when people came, and of course if you stayed there all day or a couple of days, you had to have some food, so people cooked food right outside of these little tents. When other people came from outside the community, of course, they got hungry also if they stayed there for a long period of time, and they would go to the tent and say, "That food smells great. Would you be willing to sell me a dinner or a breakfast or a lunch?" And thus started the kind of commercialization of it, and people soon realized, well, there's a market for these people that are hungry. We can sell food. And then later on it evolved into this type of tent, which really isn't a tent at all. It was pretty much a four-cornered, four-postered structure with a canvas roof, and generally the canvas roof was slanted so that the rain would run off. . . And the structure . . . generally had benches on three sides and a little serving table across the front, and people would serve the food from on the inside there, and generally they had one side open where you could serve walk-up customers. And I literally saw some people that when they brought their tent out and they were setting up, they would bring something like a 300-pound cast iron kitchen stove on the back of a truck and bring a couple of cords of wood and stack it, and they would actually cook food and bake food and set up a regular kitchen just like you would have in a house. And of course there was smoke all over the place. You'd have stove pipes going there, but most people used propane gas for their cooking.¹⁷

The large cooking pots over open fires would be used for cooking golden cabbage, ears of corn, and potatoes. Many of the campgoers served country ham and fried chicken, the former being made from hams that had been smoked in people's smokehouses for a long time. Bernice Gaines, a campgoer to Emory Grove who resided in Sandy Spring, also recalled that some people made tables at the back of their cars.¹⁸

Tabernacles

The tabernacles were the spiritual centers of the camp meeting, holding perhaps a thousand people during the height of camp meeting season. The structures were built in the American south by the 1830s. Camp meeting scholar Ellen Weiss observed: “wooden tabernacles are an American building type of remarkable consistency over a wide geographic range . . . from Virginia to East Texas.”¹⁹ Tabernacles were typically rectangular or octagonal and most featured walls that could be opened up to the outdoors so that large audiences could be accommodated (usually via folding or sliding doors) and breezes carried through. The tabernacles were usually built of pegged, often unhewn timbers with a wooden or iron, exposed roof truss system.

At Washington Grove, the Association constructed the first tabernacle in the center of the circle of tents at the 1877 camp meeting: “Though functionally it was like a tent-top made of wood perched on sticks above an open-air theater, its sturdy proportions and rustic materials gave it more the feeling of an open-air church.”²⁰ **(Figure VI-20)** The tabernacle was lit by patented gas lamps provided by one of the Grove’s residents in 1891.



Figure VI-20: The original tabernacle at Washington Grove, built in the last quarter of the 19th century. (Edwards, *Washington Grove, 1873-1937*)

At Emory Grove, the tabernacle was smaller than those at some of the ‘white’ camp meetings, but equally if not more open to nature. **(Figure VI-21)** It was a long, open-air structure dedicated to services. The building was approximately 90’ long x 40’ wide with entrances on both the sides, near the front of the tabernacle. The back was completely open to the air. The structure had a fieldstone foundation, upon which rested wooden supports that held a tin sheet metal end-gable roof. Between the supports was a chicken-wire fence that came up about 4 feet, to provide some sort of enclosure. At the front of the structure, the building featured an end wall and short sidewalls, in order to have a dry, illuminated place for the pulpit, the piano, the choir loft, and altar. The congregation always brought the cross and the piano from the Emory Grove Church and placed them in the tabernacle during camp meeting services. The interior also featured two columns of backless wooden benches for those attending services, separated by an aisle. There are strong memories from Emory Grove residents of playing in the tabernacle in the off-seasons. It was a place to gather after school and to play hide-and-seek.

The tabernacle in Spencerville dates to ca. 1930 and was built from plans developed by a committee of members, including F.F. Shoup, Calvin Butts, his son Lorenzo G. Butts, and W.E. Fincham. George Grauel supervised the construction effort. It is a large, frame, 1 1/2-story, board-clad, rectangular structure with a massive hipped pent roof . Simple squared rafters and posts with cross braces support an exposed framed roof covered in asphalt shingles. Until recently, the east and west sides of the building featured sliding bi-fold doors that operated on a track. In the summer, these doors would be opened allowing for cross breezes. **(Figure VI-22)** The south side features vertical board walls with window openings (unglazed) and operable shutters. **(Figure VI-23)** The northern side features three doors and two sizeable rectangular board openings that are hinged at the halfway point and fold down. **(Figure VI-24)**

The slightly sloping ground upon which the Spencerville tabernacle sits allows for its natural amphitheater effect. The ground, which used to be straw-covered, is now laid in poured concrete (added in the 1960s) and angles downward toward the altar, a simple raised area with benches lining the front of it for those who wish to be “saved.” The original benches were wooden and backless, but today are theater-style, slanted for rain shedding and custom-built to fit the structure. **(Figure VI-25)** In Spencerville, one of the general rules dictated that campers “exhibit an attitude of worship in the Tabernacle at all times.” It also mandated that children should be cautioned not to play in the tabernacle or use its piano or organ without permission.

The Spencerville tabernacle reportedly was used as a model for the Damascus Camp Meeting tabernacle, which is similar to it, only smaller in scale. **(Figure VI-26)** The tabernacle at Damascus is wood, but like Spencerville, has the feel of a large tent or open-air barn. **(Figure VI-27)** It features board-and-batten shutters covering window-like openings instead of canvas ones. On the inside, structural posts and rafters are revealed and seating is on park benches. At the front of the tabernacle is a small stage, prefaced by a padded railing that serves as the altar.

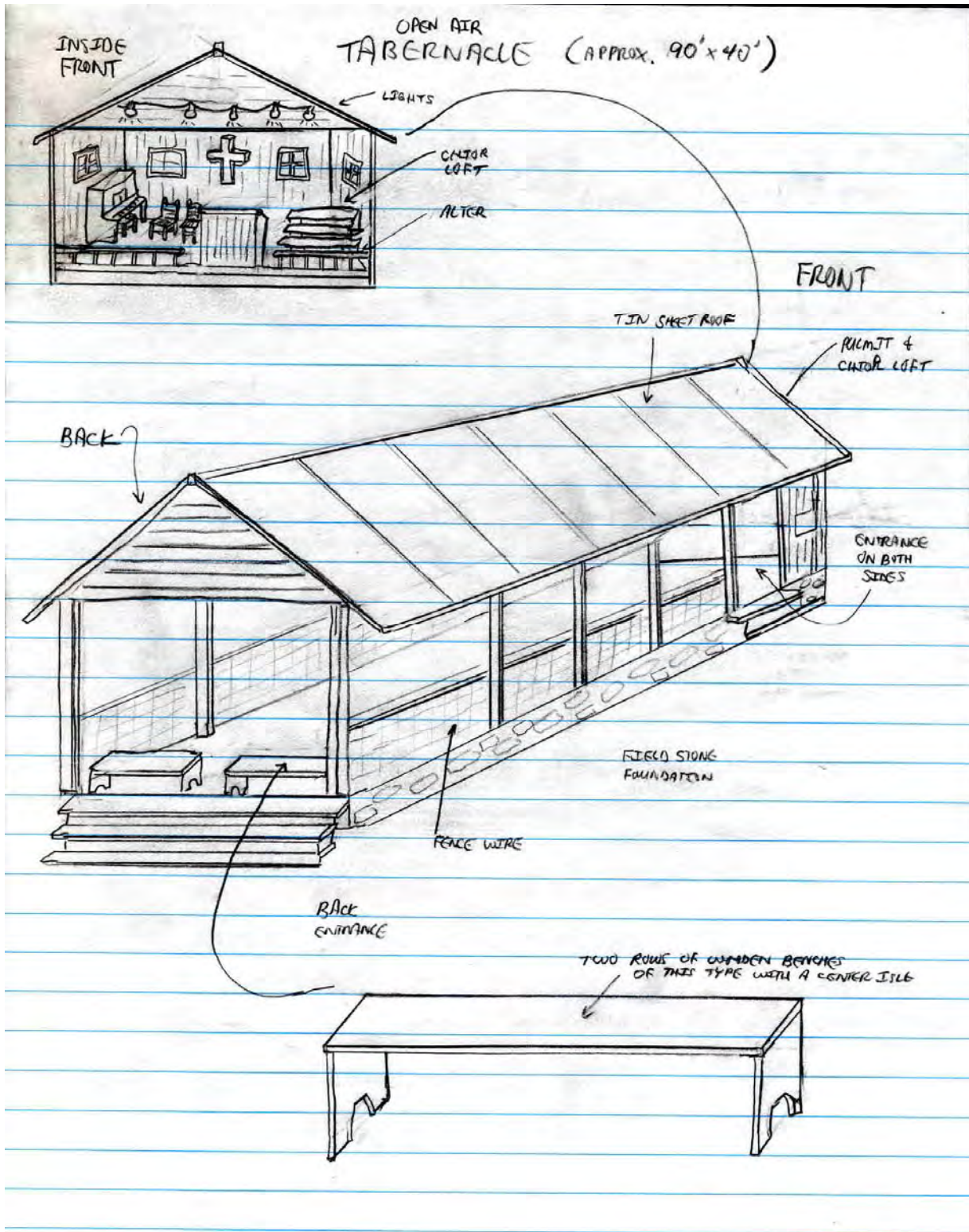


Figure VI-21: Sketch by Richard Tyler of the Emory Grove Camp Meeting tabernacle in section and perspective, with a detail of its benches. (Courtesy of Richard Tyler)



Figure VI-22: The west wall of the Spencerville tabernacle, which originally featured bi-fold doors that operated along a track. The tabernacle is opened up for the July camp meeting. (Elizabeth Jo Lampl, Montgomery County Historic Preservation Section)



Figure VI-23: The back wall of the Spencerville tabernacle showing the projecting pulpit/choir area and the hinged window openings. (Elizabeth Jo Lampl, Montgomery County Historic Preservation Section)



Figure VI-24: The front of the Spencerville Camp Meeting tabernacle in the springtime before camp meeting. The tabernacle was dedicated in 1938 as the Calvin Butts Memorial Tabernacle. (Elizabeth Jo Lampl, Montgomery County Historic Preservation Section)



Figure VI-25: Spencerville Tabernacle interior. (Elizabeth Jo Lampl, Montgomery County Historic Preservation Section)



Figure VI-26: The Damascus Camp Meeting Tabernacle. (Elizabeth Jo Lampl, Montgomery County Historic Preservation Section)



Figure VI-27: The interior of the Damascus Camp Meeting tabernacle, painted white. (Elizabeth Jo Lampl, Montgomery County Historic Preservation Section)

Auditoriums/Assembly Halls

At Washington Grove, a Chautauqua Assembly was convened between 1894 and 1904 in addition to the Camp Meeting, leading to the need for new building types. The Chautauqua combined education and entertainment and was in addition to the evangelical services. By the late 1890s, some campgoers were staying at Washington Grove until November or December. The Association decided that an indoor place was needed both for a chapel and to hold the Chautauqua. The resulting Assembly Hall was built in 1901. **(Figure VI-28)** The Chautauqua Assembly Committee was charged with the “promotion of the social, intellectual and religious life of the residents . . . after the manner of the best Chautauqua Assembly of the country, such as lectures, concerts, and socials.”²¹ The Assembly Hall had two parts: an octagonal main hall with windows on all elevations and a square meeting room section, set at a lower level. The building, though aesthetically pleasing, was fairly crude in the sense that it was devoid of plumbing, heat, or electricity. (It seems odd indeed that a building designed for indoor assembly, especially in the colder months, was designed without accommodation for heating.) The building is still standing and serves as the Washington Grove Town Hall.

By 1905, the Grove had become so popular, that a wooden auditorium of 1400 seats was built to accommodate those visiting during the Chautauqua circuit. **(Figure VI-29)** Three sides of the eighty-foot-long auditorium featured sliding doors so that the structure was essentially an open-air tabernacle. A tall, gabled and dormered roof provided light and ventilation. Unfortunately, the building was razed in the 1970s when a vote at the Town Hall produced a one-vote victory in favor of demolition.

Dining Halls/Hotels

Buildings containing rooms for rent and communal eating space have been a part of the camp meeting tradition from early on. At one time, Washington Grove had a very popular hotel. Dining halls can still be found at the two, 20th-century Montgomery County camp meetings.

At Washington Grove, the boarding business essentially started in 1870, when Mr. Wash Williams, a furniture salesman, rented rooms above his warehouse between 1st and Grove Avenues to early campgoers. As the popularity of the camp meeting grew, Mr. Williams was approached by the Washington Grove Camp Meeting Association to design and construct a hotel on the campground. In 1880, the hotel was built west of Broadway Street, with the Association as owner and Mr. Williams as its initial franchiser. A notice in *The Sentinel* on July 29, 1881 stated that the hotel was already “overflowing” and that most campers took their meals there.²² By 1884, a dining room was added to the hotel and used by both day visitors and “cottagers.” By the turn of the century, it was called the Albany Hotel. The back of the hotel featured a store and a farmer’s market. By 1927, the camp meetings had all but ended and the building was too costly to repair for so few visitors. The building was offered for sale, but there were no takers. A local builder offered to remove the building in order to reuse its lumber.

Spencerville had no hotel, but does have an interesting dining hall that contains the oldest building on the site. It was purpose-built as a World-War I-era portable school, originally located on 14th Street in northwest Washington. **(Figures VI-30 - VI-33)** The structure was



Figure VI-28: The Assembly Hall, built in 1901 at Washington Grove for indoor services, and renamed McCathran Hall in the 1950s. Today, the building serves as the town hall.
(Edwards, *Washington Grove, 1873-1937*)

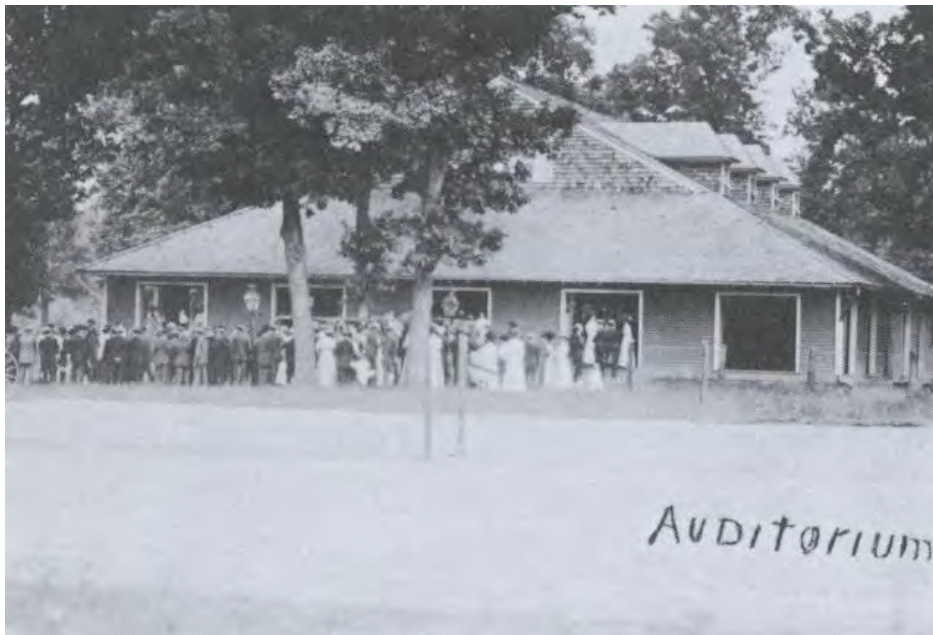


Figure VI-29: Auditorium built in 1905 to hold 1400 people during the Chautauqua days of Washington Grove. The building was razed in the 1970s. (Edwards, *Washington Grove, 1873-1937*)

purchased by campground founders in the early 1930s from the District of Columbia government.²³ The building features the standard school iconography of frame, modular construction with exposed stick work; a set of double doors on the short walls; and long, multi-pane windows. On the interior, the Roman numerals used in erecting the portable school from kit parts are visible on the floorboards. Typical of school buildings of this type, the windows open outwards, requiring convex custom screens. The building still features its original (or early) chalkboard on the rear wall. Several years after the portable was purchased in the early 1930s, a wing was added (rumored to have been a mess hall at Fort Meade, but not documented as such) and the kitchen wing was constructed in 1948. There have been additional changes to the structure since then. **(Figure VI-33)**. Damascus' Dining Hall was recently converted to a year-round church and has undergone alterations including the addition of roof dormers and artificial siding. **(Figure VI-34)**



Figure VI-30: Portion of the dining hall at Spencerville Camp Meeting that was built as a World-War I era portable schoolhouse in Washington, D.C. (Elizabeth Jo Lampl, Montgomery County Historic Preservation Section)



Figure VI-31: Sidewalls of the former portable schoolhouse that is today part of the dining hall at the Spencerville Camp Meeting. (Elizabeth Jo Lampl, Montgomery County Historic Preservation Section)



Figure VI-32: Interior of the former schoolhouse showing the original chalkboard. (Elizabeth Jo Lampl, Montgomery County Historic Preservation Section)



Figure VI-33: The dining hall/kitchen and adjacent, open-air picnic area at the Spencerville Camp Meeting. (Elizabeth Jo Lampl, Montgomery County Historic Preservation Section)



Figure VI-34: The former dining hall at Damascus Camp Meeting, which has been converted into the Damascus Wesleyan Church sanctuary. (Elizabeth Jo Lampl, Montgomery County Historic Preservation Section)

Dormitories

Buildings that were constructed to hold multiple people were a part of the campground architectural iconography early on. One of the first buildings to be constructed at Washington Grove in the 1870s, in fact, was the Preachers' Lodge, which no longer stands. By the 20th century, dormitories were not uncommon and typically segregated by sex. A dormitory was built at Spencerville as one of its first buildings, after the tabernacle and the dining hall. The dormitory was funded by F.M. Boring of Baltimore, who loaned the campground the money and canceled the debt in his will. It was a two-story structure containing 32 rooms, adorned with antique furniture. In the 1960s or 1970s, it was condemned as unsafe by the Fire Department and was razed about a decade later. The old dormitory was replaced by the Youth Building and Conference Retreat Center, which is the largest structure at Spencerville. **(Figure VI-35)** Damascus also has a dormitory that is two stories in height and straightforward in its expression. **(Figure VI-36)**

Ancillary Buildings

Stores, first-aid buildings, ticket booths, post offices, bathhouses, and clubhouses were small ancillary structures that provided campgoers with the necessary goods/services for the campground experience. These buildings became part of the campground lexicon: a concession stand from the 1950s and a first-aid station from the 1960s in Spencerville serve to illustrate the point. **(Figures VI-37 and VI-38)** These are building types that also can be found at Damascus.

In Washington Grove, the southwest corner of the community became its commercial zone. In the 1880s, an end-gable store was built there that contained the community's first post office as well. **(Figure VI-39)** Another building type to emerge at Washington Grove was the small, end-gable, clubhouse (one for men and one for women) located at either end of an athletic field. **(Figure VI-40)**

At Emory Grove, there was a small wooden "ticket house" with a couple of windows on the side close to the entrance to the campground. Here, cars would stop and pay the admission to the meeting, which, as remembered by Richard Tyler, was a minimal quarter. Later on, the Emory Grove community built a larger, cinderblock ticket house with a double entrance to accommodate visitors from both the left and right of the building, as the crowds swelled. Both of these structures were demolished during the urban renewal projects that encompassed all of Emory Grove.

Two other building types can be found at Spencerville and one at Damascus. At Spencerville, there is a pair of year-round residences that line Peach Orchard Road and are tied to the camp mission being that they are the Superintendent's Residence built by camper Lorenzo Butts (1941) and the Groundskeeper's Residence (ca. 1943-1945). **(Figure VI-41 and VI-42)** Washington Grove also had a Superintendent's House that no longer stands. Although these buildings are integral to understanding that the site needs to be supervised year-round, the architecture of these structures is typical. At Spencerville, the Superintendent's House is a Colonial Revival residence while the Groundskeeper's was a Cape Cod, later modified by a large, two-story addition. Damascus' groundskeeper's cottage is a Tidewater Colonial Revival

structure. Spencerville also had a “cook’s cottage” located behind the dining hall, but it no longer stands.

At Spencerville, most people shower at the only communal bathhouse on the grounds, a concrete-block building that dates to 1948 and not considered a contributing structure. **(Figure VI-43)** Other buildings at Damascus are bookstores and the like, which are functional in character. **(Figure VI-44)**



Figure VI-35: The Maryland-Virginia Conference of the Free Methodists’ Peach Orchard Retreat Center at the Spencerville Camp Meeting. (Elizabeth Jo Lampl, Montgomery County Historic Preservation Section)



Figure VI-36: A dormitory at the Damascus Camp Meeting. (Elizabeth Jo Lampl, Montgomery County Historic Preservation Section)



Figure VI-37: The concessions stand at Spencerville that also served as a cottage. (Elizabeth Jo Lampl, Montgomery County Historic Preservation Section)



Figure VI-38: The novelty-sided, first aid building at Spencerville, now used by the Christian Youth Crusaders. (Elizabeth Jo Lampl, Montgomery County Historic Preservation Section)



Figure VI-39: Hershey's Store in Washington Grove. (Edwards, *Washington Grove: 1873-1937*)



Figure VI-40: Men's clubhouse at Washington Grove. (Edwards, *Washington Grove, 1873-1937*)



Figure VI-41: The Washington District Parsonage at the Spencerville Camp Meeting.
(Elizabeth Jo Lampl, Montgomery County Historic Preservation Section)



Figure VI-42: The groundskeeper's cottage at Spencerville. The Cape cod section at the right is the older section. (Elizabeth Jo Lampl, Montgomery County Historic Preservation Section)



Figure VI-43: The concrete-block, pyramidal-roofed bathhouse that holds the showers and toilets for the cottage dwellers at Spencerville. (Elizabeth Jo Lampl, Montgomery County Historic Preservation Section)



Figure VI-44: The office, one of the public service buildings at Damascus Camp Meeting. (Elizabeth Jo Lampl, Montgomery County Historic Preservation Section)

NOTES

- ¹ Charles Parker, "The Camp Meeting on the Frontier," *Methodist History*, 187.
- ² Elizabeth Simpson Smith, "Camp Meetin Time," *Historic Preservation*, Vol. 30, Number 2, 1978, pp. 20-23.
- ³ Reverend B.H. Gorham, *Camp Meeting Manual: A Practical Book for the Camp Ground* (Boston: H.V. Degen, 1854)
- ⁴ Edwards, *Washington Grove: 1873-1937*.
- ⁵ *The Sentinel*, June 27, 1873.
- ⁶ Page Milburn manuscript...9. Files of the Montgomery County Historic Preservation Section.
- ⁷ *Ibid.*
- ⁸ Ellen Weiss, *City in the Woods*.
- ⁹ William Pierson, *American Buildings and Their Architects: The Gothic Revival*. 420.
- ¹⁰ Clare Lise Kelly, camp meeting files. William M. Clements, "The Physical Layout of the Methodist Camp Meeting," *Pioneer America*, January 1973, 14.
- ¹¹ Archie Hobson, ed. *Remembering America: Samples from the WPA American Guide Series* (New York: Columbia University, 1985), 341.
- ¹² See the *Springfield Portable Houses* catalog of ca. 1906.
- ¹³ *Washington Grove*, 85.
- ¹⁴ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁵ *The Washington Post*, August 13, 1987. Internet searches on air warden cottages and the Conowingo Dam did not produce any information. The air warden cottages mentioned on the Internet are British sites and the Conowingo Dam sites do not contain air warden information.
- ¹⁶ Oral History Interview of Richard Tyler by Elizabeth Jo Lampl, March 2004.
- ¹⁷ Oral History Interview, Richard Tyler.
- ¹⁸ Oral History Interview, Bernice Gaines, March 29, 2004.
- ¹⁹ Weiss, *City in the Woods*, 14.
- ²⁰ Edwards, *Washington Grove*, 80-81.
- ²¹ By-Laws of the Washington Grove Association of the District of Columbia and Maryland, 1909, p. 38.
- ²² *The Sentinel*, July 29, 1881.
- ²³ The other portable school of the "pair" of schools that was purchased from the District of Columbia became the East Washington Society church on Minnesota Avenue in southeast Washington. When the congregation went to Forestville, Maryland, the portable school/church went also. (Information from "The Camp Counselor," the newsletter of the Maryland-Virginia Conference Board of Trustees, Issue 2, Summer 1995, p. 4.

VII. CONCLUSION

For over 100 years, camp meeting was the most eagerly anticipated event of the summer for many people, old and young alike. In Montgomery County, at least four camp meetings provided an opportunity for salvation in the woods amongst friends and relatives. The ingredients of a fledgling camp meeting included: the will to gather, available transportation (in the days before the automobile), a donated or purchased piece of land, a mandatory grove of trees, a natural source of water, and itinerant preachers willing to spread the message of conversion and sanctification along their circuit rides. Camp meeting held an allure beyond basic religion, respite, and socializing. It was an outdoor evangelical event where participants had an opportunity for fellowship that lasted days, sometimes even weeks. It held out the prospects of attaining holiness in a natural setting and reconnecting with the cultural community that reflected one's identity, whether that identity was white, black, urban, rural, rich or poor.

Camp meetings nationwide used to number in the several thousands, but the active sites have dwindled in number substantially since the mid-19th century, mostly due to the appeal of secular vacations and the financial strain of keeping up a seasonal campground. According to one longtime campgoer, loss of camp meeting attendees can be explained simply by the "accumulating distractions of modern life."¹ Nonetheless, Kenneth Brown, a camp meeting historian, has documented more than 120 active camp meetings that were founded in 1876 or earlier and are still in existence at the turn of the 21st century.² Apart from the time of their origins, Ellen Weiss, author of *City in the Woods*, has documented at least 1500 camp meetings that remained active in the late 1990s. One Internet Holiness site lists more than 2,000 active Holiness camp meetings at present. As for how many active camp meetings exist in the state of Maryland, the number remains unclear because no statewide survey has been done. However, the number appears to be few, perhaps less than half-a-dozen.

The bearers of the camp meeting tradition are incredibly valuable to preservationists and folklorists, since camp meetings have become such a rarity in Maryland – a state that used to be a stronghold of the tradition. Since the late 18th century, the camp meeting has been a longstanding cultural and religious tradition across the country, yet only one of these campgrounds remains active in Montgomery County today. The camp meeting's many aspects – religious, cultural, landscape, and architectural – reflect the desire for fellowship and communion that characterize the human spirit. Its cultural treasures – the voices of its members, its imprint upon the land, and its vernacular architecture – are worthy of the attention of the preservation community.

NOTES

¹ Comment by Bernadine Gladhill Beall, former financial secretary of the Damascus Camp Meeting, in an article by the *Montgomery Journal*, August 11, 1995, titled “Weeklong Event Revives Faithful.”

² Kenneth Brown, *Holy Ground: A Study of the American Camp Meeting* (PUBLICATION INFO.), 25.

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Spencerville Camp Meeting (Removed from Atlas #15:74)
Emory Grove (Removed from Atlas #20-8)

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Vertical and photographic files
Applicable editions of *The Montgomery County Story*

Enoch Pratt Free Library
African-American Resources and Camp Meeting files

Private Photographic Collections
Thelma Scott
Olga Fairfax
Marti Theune

Rockville Public Library
The Sentinel (microfilm)

Spencerville Free Methodist Church
Anniversary Bulletins

In-person Interviews by Elizabeth Jo Lampl

Lottie Bernice Gaines, Emory Grove Camp Meeting attendee (taped and transcribed)
Reverend Glen Taylor, Emory Grove resident and Camp Meeting attendee (taped and transcribed)
Richard G. Tyler, Emory Grove resident and Camp Meeting attendee (taped and transcribed)
Gwendolyn Bell, Emory Grove Camp Meeting attendee (taped, but not transcribed)
Thelma Scott, Emory Grove resident and Camp Meeting attendee (notes)
Janet Dorsey, Emory Grove resident and Camp Meeting attendee (notes)
Marti Theune, Spencerville Camp Meeting attendee (notes)
Bernadine Gladhill Beall, Damascus Camp Meeting attendee (notes)

Telephone Interviews by Elizabeth Jo Lampl

Nina Clarke, African-American historian and author
Sister Alice Cook, Emory Grove Camp Meeting attendee
Reverend Phillip Davis, Interdenominational Church and owner, with family, of the Boyds Camp Meeting
Gloria Walters Moody, Emory Grove resident and camp meeting attendee
Pastor Hackey, Sharp Street Methodist Church
Joan Kelley, Emory Grove Camp Meeting attendee
Aletha Plummer, Longview School teacher
Barbara Talley, African-American historian
Patricia Thomas, daughter of Elizabeth Thomas, attendee of Emory Grove camp meeting