

CH-46
St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church
Bryantown

mid 19th century

This large brick church was built in the mid-19th century on the site of an earlier structure. In the late 1960s, the interior was gutted by fire and several alterations have been made since that time. St. Mary's Parish was established in 1793 on part of the original Boarman's Manor tract.

St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church

1846; 1858; 1895; c. 1960

CH-46

Bryantown

Public

The site of Catholic worship in Charles County since 1793, this large brick rectangular church was constructed in 1846, renovated in the late 19th century and gutted by fire in the late 1960's. Despite this, a fair amount of its original brickwork and some original woodwork survives. The site is currently surrounded by several significant groupings of Victorian family burial plots, a rectory, and two school buildings that date from the mid- 20th century. Despite substantial renovations over the years, St. Mary's Church in Bryantown is an important landmark in Charles County reflecting the long tradition of Catholicism in the region. A few of the known structures once standing on the site include a pre-1793 log chapel, a frame church in use until 1846, a frame rectory, a 19th century ladies seminary and the St. Mary's Colored School.

Maryland Historical Trust

Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. CH-46

1. Name of Property (indicate preferred name)

historic St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church
 other St. Mary's Church, Bryantown

2. Location

street and number 13715 Notre Dame Place not for publication
 city, town Bryantown vicinity
 county Charles

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

name Patrick O'Boyle Archbishop
 street and number 13715 Notre Dame Place telephone 301-870-2220
 city, town Bryantown state MD zip code 20617-2110

4. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Charles County Courthouse tax map and parcel: 35-70
 city, town LaPlata liber 85 folio 591

5. Primary Location of Additional Data

- Contributing Resource in National Register District
- Contributing Resource in Local Historic District
- Determined Eligible for the National Register/Maryland Register
- Determined Ineligible for the National Register/Maryland Register
- Recorded by HABS/HAER
- Historic Structure Report or Research Report
- Other

6. Classification

Category	Ownership	Current Function	Resource Count	
			Contributing	Noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce/trade	1	3
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> defense	7	
<input type="checkbox"/> site		<input type="checkbox"/> domestic		
<input type="checkbox"/> object		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> education	1	
		<input type="checkbox"/> funerary		
		<input type="checkbox"/> government		
		<input type="checkbox"/> health care		
		<input type="checkbox"/> industry		
		<input type="checkbox"/> landscape		
		<input type="checkbox"/> recreation/culture		
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> religion		
		<input type="checkbox"/> social		
		<input type="checkbox"/> transportation		
		<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress		
		<input type="checkbox"/> unknown		
		<input type="checkbox"/> vacant/not in use		
		<input type="checkbox"/> other:		
			Number of Contributing Resources previously listed in the Inventory	
			9	

7. Description

Inventory No. CH-46

Condition

<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered

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

The site of Catholic worship in Charles County since 1793, this large brick rectangular church was constructed in 1846. It was extensively renovated in the late 19th century and gutted by fire in the early 1960's. Despite this a fair amount of its original brickwork and some original woodwork survive. The site is surrounded by several significant groupings of Victorian family burial plots containing large obelisk monuments. Also sharing the site is a rectory, and two school buildings that date from the mid-20th century. These non-contributing resources replace several earlier historic structures including two previous churches, an 1879 rectory and two early 20th century school complexes.

CHURCH

The church has undergone several periods of transformation. According to documentary sources, the original church structure consisted of a rectangular building measuring 60 by 40 feet intersected with two transverse wings and an earlier belltower. In 1895 the existing slate shingles were added to replace the original wooden shingles and the current belltower was constructed. Substantial additions and alterations are most evident in the rear of the structure which was the area most heavily damaged during the 1963 fire. After this the sanctuary was enlarged and reworked and at the same time the rear wall was extended. On the façade, a large pedimented porch and a shallow one story addition have been constructed. Earlier alterations, while not easily apparent, are documented in the church's written history. (1)

The façade includes a prominent brick steeple with an open belfry supported by four brick piers with corbelled bands at the tops. Inside the piers are eight Doric columns, two sharing each open side. The belltower is capped with a four sided, tent shaped steeple that flares at the base and is finished with a cross pinnacle. The pedimented porch and brick first floor addition obscure much of the façade which historic photographs reveal once included an exterior door on either side of the existing central entranceway. (2) Above these doors were three arched windows capped with pronounced half-rounded molding. The center window has been bricked over and the remaining two are partially obscured by the brick addition.

Side elevations include a corbelled brick cornice. Five of seven original window placements exist including several 19th century stained glass panels. The two original projecting bays located on either side nearest the facade feature an inset brick arched panel containing two arched windows below a round louvered vent.

CEMETERY

Immediately surrounding the sides and rear of the church are several sizeable family burial plots including those of the Bowling, Gardiner, and Edelen families. Some of the most outstanding monuments are obelisks capped with crosses or urns. These family plots contain within 10-15 gravestones.

SITES

St. Mary's Catholic Church once operated two schools, both erected in 1915 and administered through the School Sisters of Notre Dame of Baltimore. Separate schools were constructed for Caucasian and African American children. While both were concrete block structures, the first was three stories high and 54 by 26 feet. The latter was simply described as two stories high including four rooms. In addition to the main school building both schools had their own hall which was a separate building used for larger events. A brick memorial stands on the site of the St. Mary's Colored School to commemorate the teachers and alumni of the school before it was integrated in 1956.

A log chapel and a frame church predating the existing church once stood on an undetermined site on the property. After the new brick church was constructed part of the previous frame building was moved and used as Miss Martin's seminary in the mid 19th century. Additionally, a frame rectory stood on the property that was constructed in 1879.

NON-CONTRIBUTING RESOURCES

Maryland Historical Trust

Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

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Name St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church

Continuation Sheet

Number 7 Page 1

After Reverend Louis A. Albert became pastor in 1953 a new brick rectory was constructed on the site of an earlier frame building and two new brick buildings currently serve as the school facilities. Significant landscaping has also been completed including a dual roadway and new cemetery in front of the church. The earlier cemetery surrounding the church was consecrated and therefore available only to those baptized in the Catholic Church. This new cemetery is available to non-Catholics.

ENDNOTES

- (1) "Common Bond" published in 1994 for the bicentennial anniversary of St. Mary's Catholic Church.
- (2) Ibid.

8. Significance

Inventory No. CH-46

Period	Areas of Significance	Check and justify below		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> health/medicine	<input type="checkbox"/> performing arts
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> invention	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-1999	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment/ recreation	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 2000-	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> ethnic heritage	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/ settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> social history
	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning		<input type="checkbox"/> maritime industry	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation		<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

Specific dates	1846	Architect/Builder	Unknown
Construction dates	1846;1895; 1960		

Evaluation for:

National Register Maryland Register not evaluated

Prepare a one-paragraph summary statement of significance addressing applicable criteria, followed by a narrative discussion of the history of the resource and its context. (For compliance reports, complete evaluation on a DOE Form - see manual.)

Despite substantial renovations over the years, St. Mary's Church in Bryantown is an important landmark in Charles County reflecting the long tradition of Catholicism in the region. A few of the known structures once standing on the site include a pre-1793 log chapel, a frame church in use from 1793-1846 and later used as a seminary, a frame rectory, and two early 20th century school complexes.

The history of Catholicism in Maryland began with the Act of Toleration authored by Cecil Calvert and enacted in 1649. This act granted religious freedom to non-Protestants and led to the establishment of several Catholic communities throughout Maryland. In 1790, Pope Pius VI established the first Roman Catholic diocese in the United States. Located in Baltimore and known as the See of Baltimore, this diocese initially included all of Maryland, Delaware, Virginia, North and South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama and Mississippi. One of the most organized congregations in southern Maryland was that of Upper and Lower Zachia and Mattowoman encompassing present-day areas of Waldorf, Piscataway, Aquasco, Bryantown and Benedict.

St. Mary's Church in Bryantown was formally established in 1793. On August 15th of that year the new church of frame construction, which replaced an earlier log chapel, was dedicated by Archbishop Carroll. At the time the church was home to 51 Catholics in the area. This was the second Catholic parish to be incorporated by the Assembly of Maryland; the first was the Roman Catholic Congregation of Baltimore-town then serving 2,000 Catholics which was incorporated one year earlier. In Charles County, the Congregation of Cobb Neck was later incorporated in 1799.

By 1846, plans were underway for the construction of a new brick church, rectangular in shape measuring 60 feet long and 40 feet wide. According to church records the roof had wooden shingles and large windows containing 20 panes each. Inside, the ceiling was to be of lath and plaster on a level with the eaves and there were to be two isles and a wooden altar against the rear wall. A brick addition in the rear served as a residence and sacristy. Above the entrance stood an earlier open belfry. According to published accounts, this now represents the middle section of the present church. Significant changes were made a decade later when in 1858, galleries were added on either side of the nave for African American parishioners, either enslaved or free. At the time the new brick church was constructed the parish owned 350 acres, of which 90 were part of a working, revenue producing farm that rented for \$60.00 per year. Additional revenue was derived from the "rental" of pews.

By the middle of the 1890's the congregation had grown significantly to 1,883 parishioners and plans were underway for a major renovation and expansion. In 1895 slate shingles were added and the galleries removed. Additionally, the church tower and steeple were torn down to accommodate more seating and three alters were donated by a benevolent member, Miss Gardiner, whose family occupied one of the largest and most ornate burial plots in the church cemetery. These improvements made St. Mary's Church in Bryantown the most expensive church in southern Maryland.

Maryland Historical Trust

Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

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Name St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church

Continuation Sheet

Number 8 Page 1

Since the middle of the 19th century education has been a major focus of St. Mary's Church in Bryantown. In the 1850's, a ladies seminary known as the St. Mary's Institute was established and operated by Misses Mary and Winifred Martin and later, Miss Martha Ann Purcell. This early attempt at local education was very successful until after the Civil War when the church was forced to close due to financial hardships. The school occupied a part of the previous frame church building moved to a location between the current church and rectory.

Formal educational programs were not reintroduced until 1915 when Father Conroy established a separate school for white and black children. Accounts indicate that there were 104 white children and 96 black children attending who walked a distance from three to six miles. During the first years of the 1920's a convent was constructed as an addition to the white school building which housed the Sisters of Notre Dame who ran the school. Later in 1923, Notre Dame High School was constructed. These buildings were used until 1967 after which the high school and colored school were closed and replaced with a single educational complex.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Inventory No. CH-46

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of surveyed property 5
Acreage of historical setting 350
Quadrangle name Hughesville Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

Verbal boundary description and justification

St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church in Bryantown is associated with Charles County Property Tax Map 35, Grid 8, parcel 70.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title	Cathy Currey/Historic Preservation Planner		
organization	Charles County Planning Department	date	2/15/01
street and number	200 Baltimore Street	telephone	301-396-5815
city or town	LaPlata	state MD	zip code 20646

The Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties was officially created by an Act of the Maryland Legislature to be found in the Annotated Code of Maryland, Article 41, Section 181 KA, 1974 supplement.

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

return to: Maryland Historical Trust
DHCD/DHCP
100 Community Place
Crownsville MD 21032
410-514-7600

MARYLAND INVENTORY OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Inventory No. CH-46

Section 9 Page 1

St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church
name of property
Charles County, Maryland
county and state

Major Bibliographic References:

Brown, Jack D., et al. Charles County, Maryland, A History. Charles County Bicentennial Committee, 1976.

Klaphor, Margaret Brown. The History of Charles County, Maryland. LaPlata, MD: Charles County Tercentenary, Inc., 1958.

Potyraj, John E. Common Bond: A Steeple Press Book Commemorating the Bicentennial Anniversary of St. Mary's Catholic Church Bryantown, Maryland. Norfolk, VA, 1994.

RESOURCE SKETCH MAP

Date: 1/2001

North arrow:



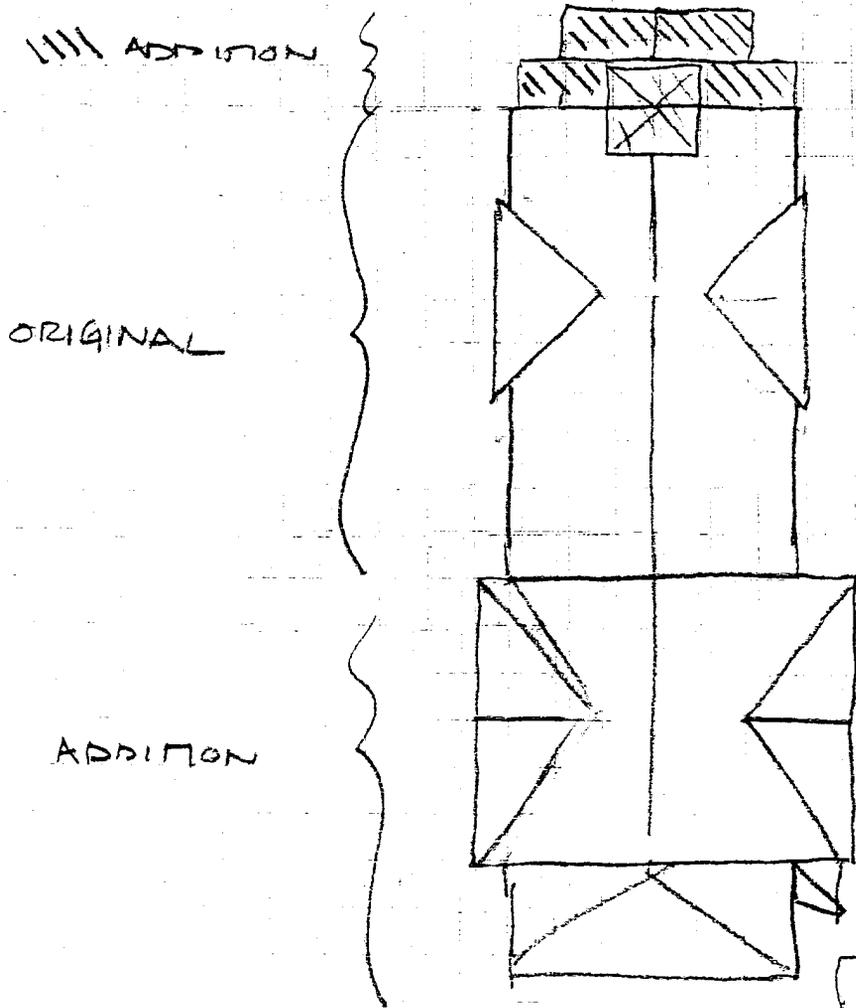
Name: ST. MARY'S ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

Address: 13715 NOTRE DAME PLACE

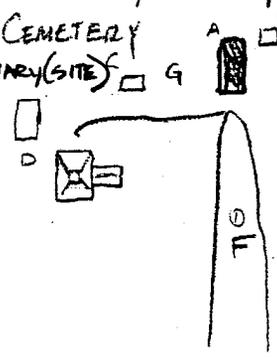
CH - 46

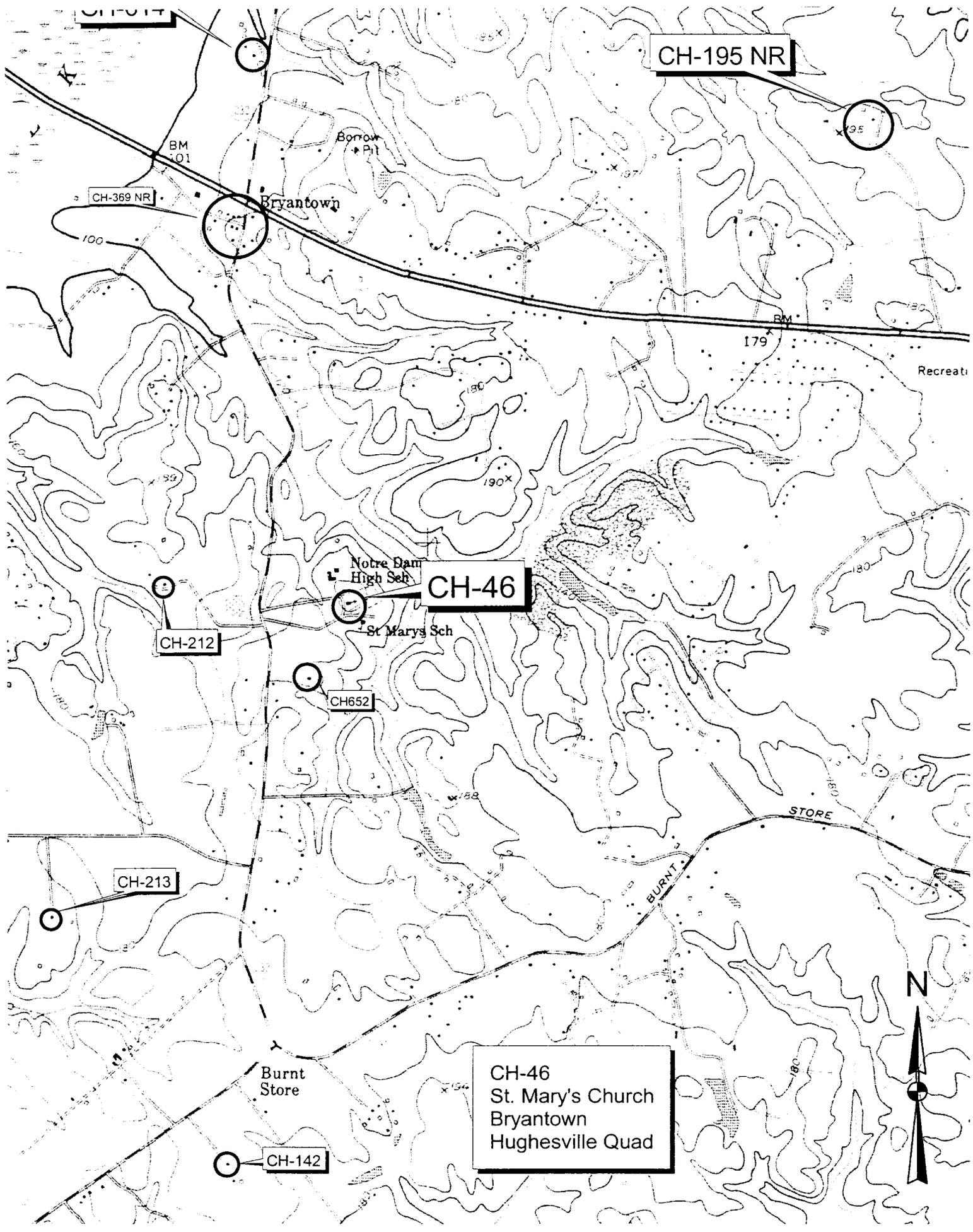
Charles County, Maryland

BRYANTOWN Vicinity



- A CHURCH
- B BOWLING FAMILY PLOT
- C RECTORY
- D SCHOOL (NEW)/SITE
- E MEMORIAL/ST. MARY'S COLORED S. SITE
- F NEW CEMETERY
- G SEMINARY(SITE)





CH-195 NR

CH-104

CH-369 NR

BM 101

Bryantown

Borrow Pit

BM 179

Recreati

Notre Dam High Sch

CH-46

St Marys Sch

CH-212

CH652

CH-213

STORE

BURNT

Burnt Store

CH-142

CH-46
St. Mary's Church
Bryantown
Hughesville Quad





CH-40

ST. MARY'S ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

CHARLES COUNTY, MD

1/2001

C. CURREY

NO 5000

LOOKING NORTHEAST

1 OF 4



CH-46
ST MARY'S ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH
CHARLES COUNTY, MD
1/2001
C. CURREY
MD SHPO
SOUTH ELEVATION
2 OF 4



CH-46

ST MARY'S ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH
BRYANTOWN

1/2001

C. CURREY
MD SHPO

BOWLING FAMILY BURIAL PLOT

3 OF 4



CH-46

ST MARY'S ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH
BRYANTOWN

1/2001

C. CURREN

MD SHPO

RECONSTRUCTED INTERIOR, LOOKING EAST

4 OF 4