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.
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 Inventory of Historic Properties Form

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 |
| city, town        | Bryantown |
| 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 |
| city, town       | Bryantown |
| telephone        | 301-870-2220 |
| zip code         | 20617-2110 |

4. Location of Legal Description

| courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. | Charles County Courthouse |
| city, town       | LaPlata |
| tax map and parcel | 35-70 |
| 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

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Number of Contributing Resources previously listed in the Inventory: 9
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 are 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
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

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</tbody>
</table>

Specific dates: 1846

Construction dates: 1846, 1895, 1960

Architect/Builder: Unknown

Evaluation for:

National Register: 1846, 1895; 1960

Maryland Register: X 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 alter 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.
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

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 Bryanton 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
Major Bibliographic References:


CH - 46
ST. MARY'S ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH
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1/2001
C. CURREY
MD SHPO
LOOKING NORTH EAST
1 OF 4
St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church
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C. Curey
MD SHPO
South Elevation
2 of 4
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St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church
BRYANTOWN
1/2001
C. CURZELL
MD SHPO
BOWLING FAMILY BURIAL PLOT
3 of 4
CH-46
St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church
Bryantown
1/2001
C. Currey
MD State
Reconstructed Interior, Looking East
4 of 4