

**CH-523**

**1908**

**Pleasant Grove Baptist Church & Cemetery**

**Marbury vic.**

**Private**

Erected in 1908 near the village of Marbury, Pleasant Grove Baptist Church & Cemetery represents a typical early 20th century vernacular church compound. The church building is a plainly decorated frame structure with a centered tower and pointed-top windows reminiscent of the religious Gothic Revival style. Although expanded significantly, the church retains its original form, and much of its original materials. Adjacent to the original church is a small cemetery that included the grave of the church's founder.

Pleasant Grove Baptist Church is an excellent example of a rural African-American Baptist chapel established in the early 20th century. While altered in dimension, the building retains most of its character-giving features, including the central projecting tower and pointed-top windows. The building is in fair condition.

MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST  
MD INVENTORY OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES

Inventory No. CH-523

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1. Name of Property

=====

historic name Pleasant Grove Baptist Church  
common/other name \_\_\_\_\_

=====

2. Location

=====

street & number Pleasant Grove Rd. not for publication \_\_\_\_\_  
city or town Marbury vicinity X state Maryland code MD  
county Charles code 017 zip code 20658

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3. State/Federal Agency Certification N/A

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4. National Park Service Certification N/A

=====

5. Classification

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Ownership of Property (Check all that apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property (Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing		Noncontributing		
<u>1</u>		<u>1</u>		buildings
<u>1</u>		<u>0</u>		sites
<u>0</u>		<u>0</u>		structures
<u>0</u>		<u>0</u>		objects
<u>2</u>		<u>1</u>		Total

Is this property listed in the National Register?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ Name of Listing \_\_\_\_\_  
No X

=====

6. Function or Use

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Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: <u>RELIGIOUS</u>	Sub: <u>Church</u>
<u>FUNERARY</u>	<u>Cemetery</u>

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: <u>RELIGIOUS</u>	Sub: <u>Meeting hall</u>
<u>FUNERARY</u>	<u>Cemetery</u>

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7. Description

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Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

Vernacular Gothic Revival

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Pier: poured concrete

roof Front gable: pressed copper sheets

walls Frame: wood German siding

other \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Narrative Description (Describe the historic and current condition of the property.)

See Continuation Sheet No. 7-1

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8. Statement of Significance  
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Applicable National Register Criteria (Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations (Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or a grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

MARYLAND INVENTORY OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Inventory No. CH-523

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Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

RELIGION  
ARCHITECTURE  
\_\_\_\_\_

Period of Significance 1908-1981  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Significant Dates 1908  
1981  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)  
\_\_\_\_\_

Cultural Affiliation African American  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Architect/Builder Unknown  
\_\_\_\_\_

Narrative Statement of Significance (Explain the significance of the property.)

See Continuation Sheet No. 8-1

9. Major Bibliographical References

(Cite the books, articles, legal records, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

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

Charles County Land Records. Charles County Courthouse, La Plata, Maryland.

"History of Pleasant Grove Baptist Church," Undated article furnished by Mary Smallwood of the congregation.

Klapthor, Margaret Brown. *The History of Charles County, Maryland*. La Plata, MD: Charles County Tercentenary, Inc., 1958.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 3.14 acres

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The property is designated as Parcel 166 on Map 20, Grid 21 on the Charles County Property Map.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

Pleasant Grove Baptist Church has been associated with Parcel 166, Map 20 since its construction in 1908.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Kathryn Gettings Smith, Architectural Historian  
organization Charles County Planning Dept. date May 5, 1999  
street & number P.O. Box B telephone 301-645-0689  
city or town La Plata state MD zip code 20646

12. Property Owner

name Pleasant Grove Baptist Church (contact: Frederick Lancaster)  
street & number P.O. Box 273 telephone 301-283-3396  
city or town Marbury state MD zip code 20658

MARYLAND INVENTORY OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Inventory No. CH-523

Section 7 Page 1

Pleasant Grove Baptist  
name of property  
Charles County, Maryland  
county and state

=====

Erected in 1908 near the village of Marbury, Pleasant Grove Baptist Church & Cemetery represent a typical early 20th century vernacular church compound. The church building is a plainly decorated frame structure with a centered tower and pointed top windows reminiscent of the religious Gothic Revival style. Although expanded significantly, the church retains its original form, and much of its original materials. Adjacent to the original church is a small cemetery that included the grave of the church's original founder.

The church occupies a roadside site located along a stretch of the original public road, now fragmentized and renamed Pleasant Grove Road. The lot slopes down towards the rear, and back to the cemetery behind the church. A dirt road called Beulah Pauline Place extends past the church on the north to several dwellings behind the church lot. Scattered mature trees grow on the property.

Pleasant Grove Baptist Church consists of a 1-story frame building with a front gable roof and a centered projecting two-tiered tower at its front. The building stands on a poured concrete pier foundation, and is covered by a wide front gable roof clad with decorative pressed metal sheets. The wide overhanging eaves contain exposed scroll-sawn decorative rafter tails. Two interior brick chimney flues extend beyond the roof on the north and south sides of the building.

The church's facade is divided into three bays. The central bay is dominated by the projecting tower that houses a small entry vestibule in its first story tier. A double-leaf flush replacement wood door opens into the vestibule. Flanking the projecting tower are identical 2/2 light wood sash windows. These windows are defined by pointed tops and plain, square-edged wood casings.

The facade tower narrows as it rises to its second tier. Here the tower is square in plan and extends just slightly beyond the roof ridge. The tower terminates in a lattice-enclosed belfry capped by a pyramidal metal roof. Evidence visible within the exterior cladding of the facade indicates the original dimensions of the 1908 church. When the building was expanded, perhaps as early as 1920, the length remained the same, but the width was extended, creating a wider gable.

Both side walls of the church are lined with a row of five evenly spaced pointed-top windows, each containing its original 2/2 wood sash. These windows are again surrounded by plain square-edged

MARYLAND INVENTORY OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Inventory No. CH-523

Section 7 Page 2

Pleasant Grove Baptist  
name of property  
Charles County, Maryland  
county and state

=====  
wood casings. The rear wall contains two single-leaf door openings, one holding a 5-panel wood door, and the other, a 4-panel wood door. Two horizontal window opens set between the two doors have been enclosed with plywood.

CEMETERY:

The small church cemetery lies directly east, behind the church building. Set on a wooded knoll, the cemetery features approximately 50 graves, many marked with the remnants of cedar wood crosses. A small family plot with a few engraved headstones is marked off from the cemetery with a low brick wall.

The new church building was built between 1974 and 1981 on an adjacent tract, just north of the old church. This building is 1-story brick-clad building with a front gable roof.

Section 8 Page 1

Pleasant Grove Baptist  
name of property  
Charles County, Maryland  
county and state

=====

Pleasant Grove Baptist Church is an excellent example of a rural African-American Baptist chapel established in the early 20th century. While altered in dimensions, the building retains most of its character-giving features, including the central projecting tower and pointed-top windows. The building is in fair condition.

Pleasant Grove Baptist Church was founded in August 1907 by Sister Addie E. Thomas of Marbury. Thomas had grown up attending Mount Hope Baptist Church nearby, and was inspired to form a new congregation to serve the Marbury area. Services were held at Sister Thomas's home before 1908. In that year, with increasing attendance, Sister Thomas convinced Thomas Simmons, a local landowner, to donate a portion of his property as the site for their new church.<sup>1</sup> Simmons donated 3/4 of an acre to the "Pleasant Grove Colored Baptist Church of Charles County," and construction on the building began.

Sister Thomas and her family completed much of the site clearing on their own. The first place of worship consisted of a mere platform, pulpit and long benches for seating set in a quarter acre of open space. By July of 1910, however, a full building had been completed under the leadership of Sister Thomas and Reverend R.B. Ward. The first Deacons of Pleasant Grove Baptist Church were Henry Hemsley, Harrison Mills, John Ball, and John Coleman.

The church building was expanded at some point prior to circa 1930. Although the building was widened and heightened, the original windows were retained and reused, as was the original layout.

The small church cemetery is significant as a rare example of an African-American graveyard with the remnants of its original cedar cross markers remaining.

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<sup>1</sup> "History of Pleasant Grove Baptist Church."

MARYLAND INVENTORY OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Inventory No. CH-523

Pleasant Grove Baptist  
name of property  
Charles County, Maryland  
county and state

=====

**HISTORIC CONTEXT:**

**Geographic Organization:** Western Shore

**Chronological/Development Period (s):**

Industrial/Urban Dominance, 1870-1930  
Modern Period, 1930-present

**Prehistoric/Historic Period Theme (s):**

RELIGION  
FUNERARY  
ARCHITECTURE

**RESOURCE TYPE(S)**

**Category:** Building

**Historic Environment:** Rural

**Historic Function (s):** RELIGIOUS/Church  
FUNERARY/Cemetery

**Known Design Source:** Unknown

MARYLAND INVENTORY OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Inventory No. CH-523

Pleasant Grove Baptist  
name of property  
Charles County, Maryland  
county and state

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**Chain of Title:**

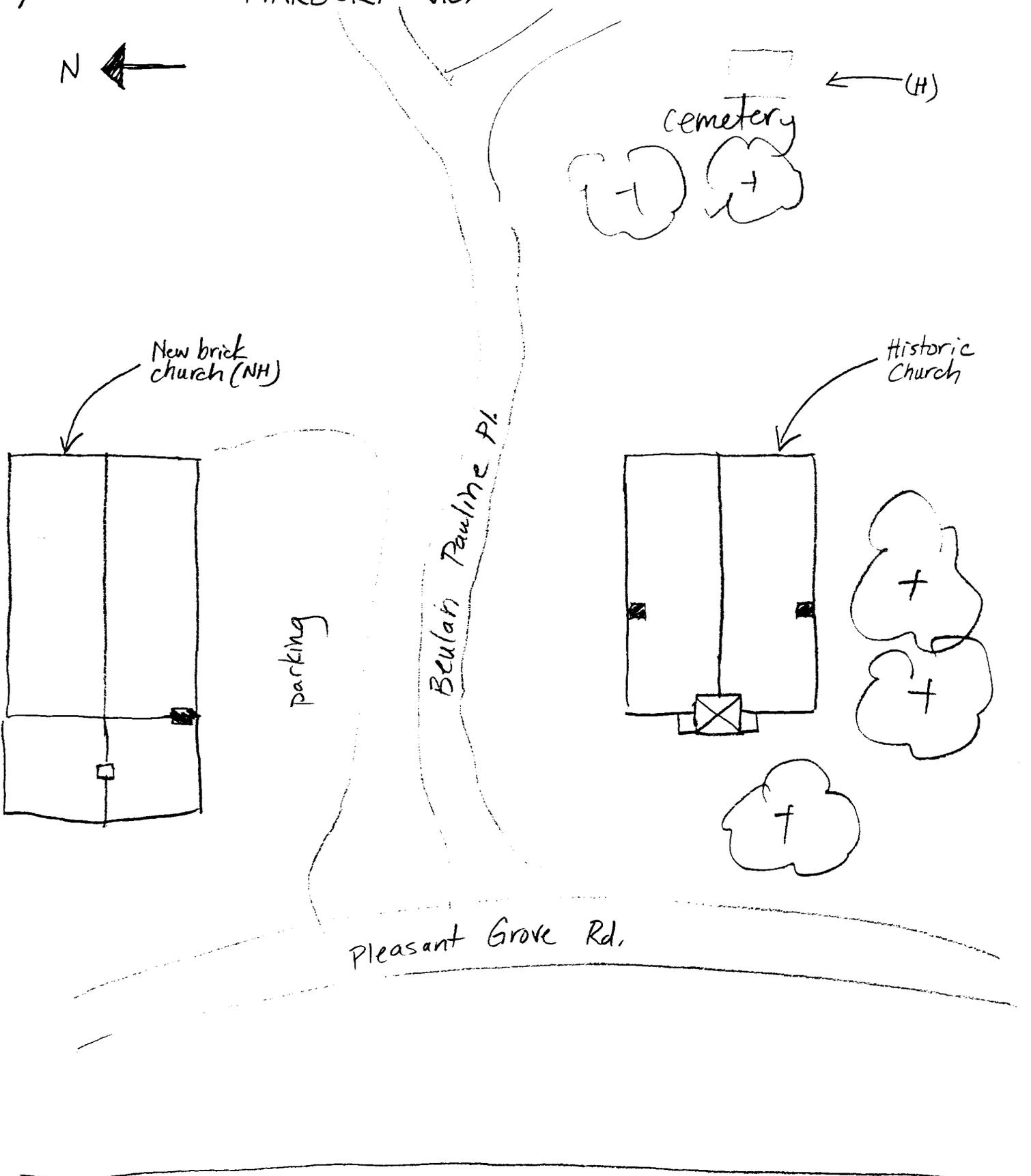
August 22, 1906: Francis E. & Sarah E. Mattingly to  
Thomas Simmons  
\$75  
5 acres, 2 roods, 34 perches  
Charles County Land Records  
Liber FDM 17 Folio 437

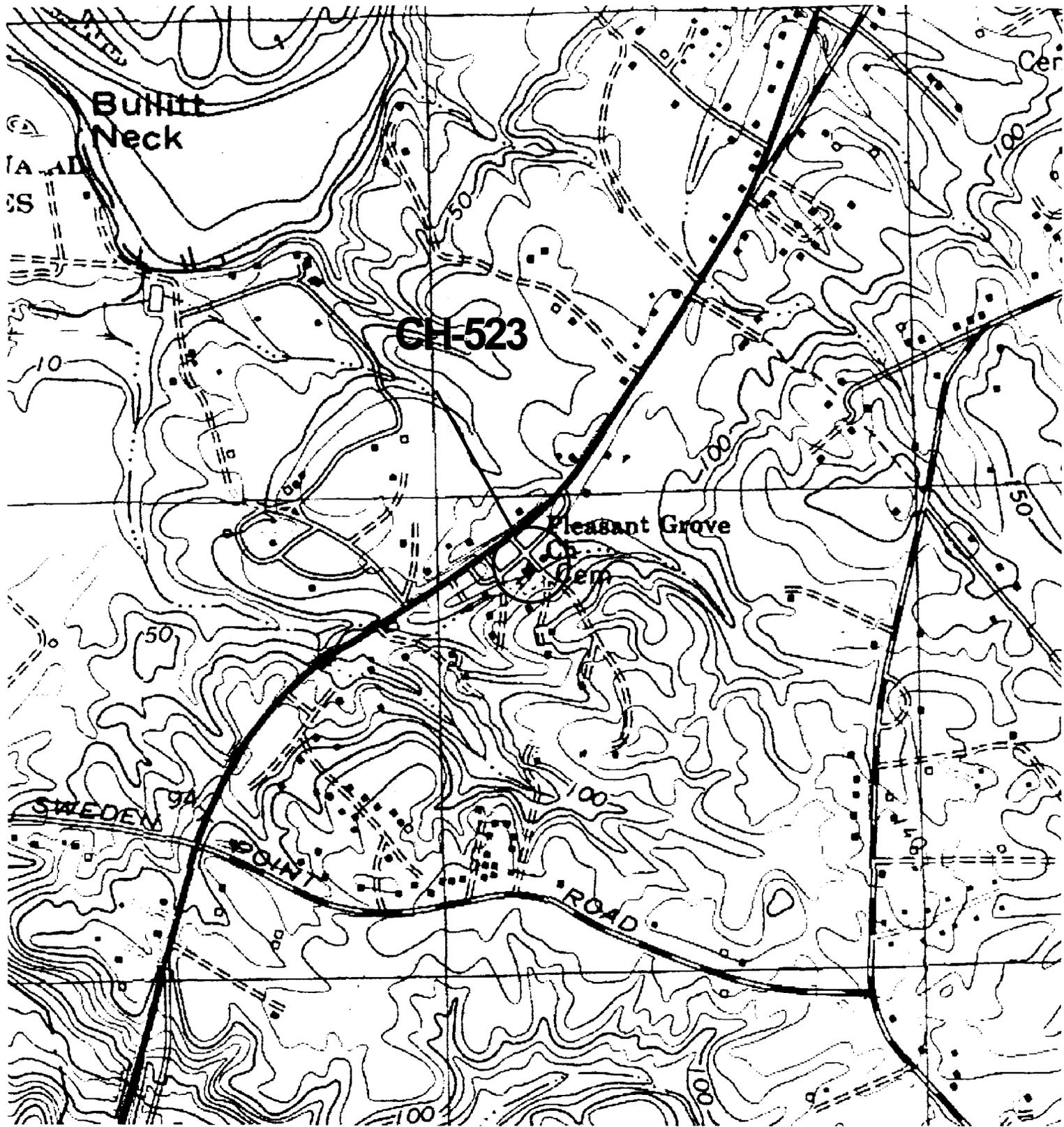
November 28, 1907: Thomas Simmons to Reverend Robert B.  
Ward & Daniel Thomas, Trustees of  
Pleasant Grove Colored Baptist  
Church  
3/4 acre on South side of public  
road from Grinders Wharf to Marbury  
P.O.  
Charles County Land Records  
Liber 24 Folio 150

RESOURCE  
SKETCH  
MAP  
2/

Pleasant Grove Baptist Church  
CHARLES COUNTY, MD  
MARBURY VIC.

CH-523





Pleasant Grove Baptist Church  
Charles County, MD

CH-523

INDIAN HEAD, MD QUAD



CH-523

PLEASANT GROVE BAPTIST CHURCH  
CHARLES COUNTY, MD

K.G. SMITH

2/99

MARYLAND SHPO

LOOKING NE

1 OF 5



CH-523  
PLEASANT GROVE BAPTIST CHURCH  
CHARLES COUNTY, MD  
K.G. SMITH

2/99  
MARYLAND SHPO  
LOOKING SW  
2 OF 5

ST. JOHN'S BAPTIST CHURCH  
ORGANIZED OCT. 1907.  
BUILT JULY 1908.  
DANIEL THOMAS, R. B. WARD,  
STEVEN LAWSON,  
TRUSTEES.  
BY R. B. WARD, PASTOR.

CH-523  
PLEASANT GROVE BAPTIST CHURCH  
CHARLES COUNTY, MD  
KG. SMITH  
2/99  
MARYLAND SHPO  
CORNERSTONE  
3 OF 5



CH-523

PLEASANT GROVE BAPTIST CHURCH  
CHARLES COUNTY, MD

K.G. SMITH

2/99

MARYLAND SHPO

VIEW OF CEMETERY - LOOKING SE

4 OF 5



CH-523

PLEASANT GROVE BAPTIST CHURCH  
CHARLES COUNTY, MD

K.G. SMITH

2/99

MARYLAND SHPO

1981 CHURCH-LOOKING NE

5 OF 5