

K-614

Circa 1900

Goits Public School

Goits

Private

The Goits Public School is one of only several similar surviving county two-storey frame schools dating from the turn of the century (also the Edesville School, K-499, and the Piney Neck School, K-494). Like the others, it was not the community's first school but built in response to dramatic growth of the area--in Goits' case the result of the coming of the railroad to Kent County after the Civil War. These replacement schools, while still simple frame buildings, were not only larger with two classrooms but also more sophisticated than the earlier schools. Possibly built from a plan supplied by the state, they were handsome additions to their communities with their Victorian interpretation of an earlier Greek Revival "classical academy" style: shingled approach gable but pedimented, strong cornice returns, gable-end entry, and overall symmetry. These schools strongly resemble the much older brick academy building in Centreville, Queen Anne's County. A victim of the decline of the community and school consolidation, the school closed in 1933.

Maryland Historical Trust State Historic Sites Inventory Form

1. Name (indicate preferred name)

historic Golts Public School

and/or common

2. Location

street & number Southwest side Bradford Johnson Road, about 500 feet
southeast of intersection with Black Bottom not for publication

city, town Road.
Golts, MD vicinity of congressional district

state Maryland county Kent

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational	<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> not applicable	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other: vacant

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

name Mrs. Reba Vansant Wharton

street & number telephone no.:

city, town Golts, state and zip code Maryland 21637

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Kent County Court House liber RAS 19
416 &

street & number Cross Street folio WHG 70/205

city, town Chestertown state Maryland

6. Representation in Existing Historical Surveys None

title

date federal state county local

depository for survey records

city, town state

7. Description

Survey No. K-614

Condition		Check one	Check one	
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site	
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved	date of move _____
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed			

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

Located on the southwest side of Bradford Johnson Road southeast of the crossroads in the village of Golts, the now-vacant Golts Public School is a two-storey, two-classroom, gable-roofed, frame school. Three bays wide on the entry end and three bays deep, it is covered with horizontal German shiplap weatherboard except for the front gable, which has clipped-corner wood shingles, a Queen Anne Victorian convention. A belfry has been removed from the roof. It was built about 1900 in what might be called a simple, rather spare, "classical Maryland academy" style that, despite its late date, is reminiscent of local Greek Revival buildings because of its symmetry, the pedimented front gable and strong cornice returns, and the gable-end entry. It bears a strong resemblance to the much older brick academy building in Centreville, Queen Anne's County. Perhaps built from a standard plan provided by the state department of education, it closely resembles the old schools in Edesville and Piney Neck. Sold by the Board of Education in 1938, it later was converted to a dwelling; it is now vacant.

The northeast entry end has only a central entry on the first story. Above, on the second storey, there is a window in each side bay. Both long sides originally had three evenly-spaced windows on each storey although the northwest side's rearmost bay now has a door instead of a window, added when the building was converted to a dwelling. Though the windows appear to be evenly spaced from each other, the side windows closest to the front gable-end are closer to the corner than the rear side windows are to the rear corner because the former light only the shallow, building-wide front vestibule. In the rear there is a window in each bay on each storey. As on the sides, they are aligned from first to second storey.

The exterior, except for the front gable, is clad in horizontal German shiplap weatherboard of pine, from which the paint has weathered almost completely. There are signs of old buff-colored paint, but when it was a school, the main body of the building was said to have been painted grey, evidently the standard Kent County School color. There are 3-5/8" double cornerboards. Within the front gable there are wood shingles, with corners sawn off. The fully-returned cornice from the sides' eaves separates the shingling from the weatherboard below. In the rear the German shiplap is continuous into the gable.

The building's frame rests on a brick crawl-space foundation, laid in common 1-to-7 bond. The original square chimney, for a classroom stove on each storey, is within the wall in the center of the rear gable-end, exiting through the roof ridge. It has no decorative features and appears to have been shortened. An exterior, second chimney was built just to the rear of the center bay on the southeast side at the time the building was converted to a dwelling. It is made of concrete block and is lined with flue tiles. It evidently serves a furnace since oil tanks stand adjacent.

Roof material is of modern large-sheet, standing-seam metal applied over the original wood shingles. At the time of re-roofing the pyramidal-roofed belfry and bell were removed from near the front gable-end. On page 74 of Usilton's History of Kent County an old photograph of the Edesville Public School, which is almost identical to the Gölts School, shows such a belfry in place.

At the eaves and ends the roof overhangs about 12 inches. The roof is boldly and handsomely finished. The cornice is boxed, with a crown molding of a 4-5" cyma recta with fillets. Beneath the gable cornices is a deep frieze, with a small plain bed molding applied at its top edge. In the front only there is a small cyma recta molding applied below the frieze's lower edge. In the rear there are ca. 36" long returns, while at the front end the cornice returns are continued across the front, thereby creating a pediment.

The main (and only original) entry has a tall door with a three-light transom. It is located in the center of the northeast gable end. A wooden screen door is in place. The main door, which appear to post-date the building, has two large 1-over-1 panels. The panels may be of plywood. The knob appears to date from the middle twentieth century, and there are no signs of old hardware. The trim is plain and 4" wide. Above the lintel's 4" trim there is a drip cap with compound molding below, on the 4" trim. Differing slightly from the trim of the windows, this part of this door's trim may be a replacement. The probably wooden original steps and/or small porch are gone, and there is no sign of a balustrade or hand rail ever having been attached to the wall. Now there are only dry-laid concrete blocks forming an 8-foot wide stoop with three steps. The old Edesville School appears to have had only quite narrow steps. The added, secondary entry (probably into a kitchen) in the rear bay of the northwest side replaced a window.

The windows, which appear to be the same size on both storeys, are double-hung with 6-over-6 lights. Each light is 9" wide by 15" high. Trim is 4" wide and plain. At the head it overhangs the side trim (dog-eared) by about 1". Below the drip cap that is above the trim, a modified cyma reversa with separated bead below has been applied to the plain trim piece. The wooden sills are double; some windows have combination storm windows and screens.

Only half of one pair of an usual, handsome type of shutters remains, on the center bay first-storey window of the northwest side. Originally shutters were at each window. The upper three-fourths of the shutter has fixed louvers, while the lowest quarter has a recessed and slightly raised panel with applied ogee-and-bevel panel molding. (continued)

The interior, which has been converted to a dwelling and once served as a post office but has been unused for some time, was not seen. It was described by the owner. Partitions have been added for use as a dwelling. The main entry opened into a shallow vestibule that spanned the width of the building. In the northwest corner, to the right of the door, was a stair to a second-storey vestibule that was the same size and shape as that of the first storey. It was not clear whether the stair was quarter-turn with landing or dogleg. The second-storey balustrade was solid, covered by the same vertical-board material used as wainscoting throughout the building. Each vestibule, for hanging coats, had a door into that storey's classroom. The first-storey vestibule was lit by the first window on each long side of the building while the windows in the next two bays lit the classroom. This explains why the front-bay windows are set so far toward the front corner. The lower walls were covered with vertical-board wainscoting that was beaded and stained dark and varnished. The now-painted wainscoting seen through a window was unusually tall. It is higher than the window sills, extending almost to the level of the lowest window light. Interior trim is varnished. The upper walls and ceilings were plaster that were always painted a light color. There was no electricity in Golts until after the school closed, when it was installed through REA. Until then the only source of light was from the windows, which explains the generously-sized windows in county rural schools. Chalkboards were above the wainscoting on the partition wall with the vestibule and between the windows on the side walls. There was a coal stove in each classroom. The second-storey classroom had an organ, for use during "morning exercises," in which hymns and patriotic songs were sung, readings were given from the Bible or of instructive quotations, and the Lord's Prayer said. The floors were of unfinished ca. 4-6" wide random hard-pine boards. Most of the desks were double and fastened to the floor. The seats, which folded up, were attached to the writing portion of the desk unit behind.

The school is set back about 100 feet from Bradford Johnson Road, in a small clearing among large, high-branching deciduous trees. The trees may have been planted in concentric rings or rows around the school. The soil is a very sandy loam, on which some grass grows but no brush. The lot is lumpy and slightly higher to the rear, but it drops quite abruptly to the adjacent farm field. There is a modern well on the east side of the building. To the southwest near the rear lot line is a single "necessary" with a concrete base or slab. To the southeast is a small shed-roofed shed that may (or may not) have been the coal shed that was located at all rural schools in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Views from the school site: to the southeast down Bradford Johnson Road away from the village a frame late Victorian two-storey dwelling can be seen on the same side of the road. It was said to have been built by Joseph W. Peacock, a logging entrepreneur. Across the road to the northeast are woods and the lawn of the outermost house of the crossroads cluster. To the northwest are several houses on the other side of Bradford Johnson Road that are close to the crossroads. All the buildings in Golts are frame, and almost all seem to date from the late nineteenth or early twentieth century.

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According to Mrs. Wharton, the village area and the entire distance down to her house (about 4/10 of a mile southeast from the crossroads) was formerly quite open, with lawns and picket fences. It now is considerably grown up, much of it in woods. There formerly were more open farm fields also. To the northwest on the same side of the road, across the now-vacant lot where the church hall formerly was, the now-unused Golts Methodist Church (K-627) can be seen, with Black Bottom Road just beyond. Farther to the northwest, in the distance, the crossroads and some of the village buildings are visible. Behind the school, to the south and southwest, is a cultivated farm field with Black Bottom Road beyond it. Several modern dwellings can be seen in the distance.

The school is noted on the 1877 map as School No. 9 of District 1. Presumably it was the building noted in an 1871 deed. (This deed is described in a typescript anecdotal history of old Kent County schools, available at Cliffs School in Quaker Neck; there is no deed reference.) In the deed, dated July 1, 1871, from Edwin S. Morris et al. to the Board of School Commissioners of Kent County a "lot of land" and "unfinished building thereon as a place for a Public Free School and for religious worship on the Holy Sabbath" were sold for \$100. In addition, "The said Board of School Commissioners agree to expend the sum of \$125 to complete the building, and to allow the use and occupancy of said building and grounds, for the purpose of religious worship and Sabbath School instruction on the Sabbath Day." Since the Golts Methodist Church was not built until 1884-85, presumably dual use of the early school continued until that time.

Why there is another, later deed for what appears to be the same property is not clear. On November 23, 1883, Henry A. Archer and his wife Mary E. Archer deeded to the School Commissioners what appears to be the same or nearby property (Kent County Land Records, SB 5/30). The church deed of the next year may shed some light on this. In it Daniel H. Kent and his wife Mary E. Kent sold to the church a lot that had been part of a 100+ tract in 1883. The church deed notes that the previous owner of the large tract (a farm called Bright Helmstone) had been Henry Archer and his wife Mary E. Archer, of Harford County, and E. Sheppard Morris was said to have been the occupant of the farm. Perhaps this was Edwin S. Morris, who deeded the property for the first school and whose ownership was challenged successfully so that the deed was defective. (SB 4/675; 5/9/1883)

The church deed contains bits of interesting information about the community of Golts itself. Daniel Kent and his wife (of Wilmington, Delaware) evidently intended to be the "developers" of a town at Golts, although perhaps some buildings had been built in the area between the 1877 map date and 1884. The deed says that the church lot is "in a Town recently laid out by the said Kent, to be known as Golts." As indicated above, the Kents' plans seemed to be of rather recent origin, for only a little more than a year earlier the Kents had bought the 100+ acre tract from which the church lot later come (from the Archers).

A plat for the proposed town could not be located, and there has not been sufficient subsequent development in Golts to be able to discern a laid-out town. The probably large-scale scheme of the Kents evidently failed, though the reasons are not known. One of the houses across from the church is said to date from 1885, and there is a short row of houses along the railroad track. The town seems to have been intended to be centered around the present-day intersection of Bradford Johnson Road with Black Bottom-Cold Well Road. The town's church and school would be located at or near this intersection. Bradford Johnson Road (then called the Delaware and Sassafras Road), on which the church and school fronted, was to be called Front Street.

The W. Gilbert Wharton, the late husband of the surviving school's present owner, was said to have been a young boy when the Golts school was
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built; he remembered watching the construction. Mrs. Wharton put the date at about 1900. The 17-year time lag between the second deed (1883) and the approximate building date of 1900 for the second school might be explained by the deed's either simply perfecting earlier granted title or by funding or other delays in meeting what was probably an earlier-perceived need for larger and better facilities. The 1871 school most likely was a simple one-room school, built before the real growth of the area and when the county was struggling to provide the most basic school facilities throughout the county.

The form and style of the surviving building are almost identical to those of several other two-room county schools said to have been built about the turn of the century--the Edesville Public School (K-499) and the Piney Neck Public School (K-494), the former having the entry in a side bay of the gable end rather than in the center. The circa 1900 date therefore seems to be correct, and the existence of these three very similar buildings suggests that they were built from a common plan, perhaps one provided or approved by the state education department. The 1865 school law that reformed public education in Maryland and led to a school-building boom in Kent County stated that new schoolhouses had to be built according to uniform plans approved by the state superintendent. In 1865 the state prepared five sets of plans and specifications and sent them to the school commissioners of each county. This writer does not know if this practice continued, but it seems likely. The 1865 school reforms also limited the number of children to be taught by one teacher. If there were 60 or more, the school was to be graded and two teachers provided.

In 1900 itself the county school report lists only one teacher for the Golts School--Maude Bramble--indicating that the two-room school was not yet in place. In the pre-World War I period, when Mrs. Wharton attended the school, there were about 85 students in attendance, clearly indicating the need for at least a two-room school. There were nine grades at the school, the seven elementary grades and the first two years of high school. At the time when the Golts School had nine grades, students who sought the tenth had to travel to the Massey School. Only the Rock Hall, Galena, and Chestertown schools had as many as eleven grades, though Millington did for a time. The small children were in the first-storey classroom and the older ones upstairs. The fourth grade was a kind of transitional year; half the subjects were taught by one teacher and half by the other. She reported that when she attended the school and up until the early 1920s, students could come from Delaware at will. The Golts school was considered a better school than the nearby Delaware one-room schools so that if students could get themselves to Golts, they were allowed to attend. The ending of this practice is perhaps the reason for the listing of Golts School among the county's one-teacher schools in the 1922-23 annual report. In 1924 the school enrolled 11 boys and 18 girls, with one teacher. A victim of school consolidation, the Golts school was closed in 1933, even though there were 25 or 26 children attending. The children were then transported to Massey, where there were two teachers. That school closed in the 1940s.

The "rural improvement" movement began in the teens and gained
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strength in the 1920s. One aspect of it was improved education for rural children, which proponents felt could not be achieved in one-teacher schools. Consolidation of schools, which would make available a variety of facilities, teachers and courses, was the answer, it was thought. Large, centrally-located schools were made possible only by the growing use and availability of motor vehicles. It seems to have been in the 1920s that Kent County began to transport schoolchildren and close the smallest and most inadequate one-room schools, though the number of schools overall had decreased since 1900.

Consolidation accelerated in the 1930s, pressed by the difficult economic times and a county school superintendent who favored consolidation for its educational as well as economic benefits. In 1932 Superintendent Robinson proposed closing 16 one-teacher schools. Although consolidation had its advocates, there was also considerable opposition. One opponent wrote the Kent News in 1932 that "The consolidated schools may have more health facilities but when an epidemic strikes it goes like wildfire. One-room schools have little sickness...they are more economical. We don't need more taxes now." By 1934 there were only 13 one-teacher schools in the county, and by 1944 only one remained, in Still Pond. It closed in 1951, marking an end to the era in which every community had a school.

History of Golts

The network of roads that developed during the last quarter of the nineteenth century around Golts, with Golts as a meeting point, probably heightened belief in the promise of the new town of Golts as laid out by the Kents. The 1877 atlas map shows only one road leading to what was to become Golts-- what is now called Bradford Johnson Road. It crossed the train tracks from the northwest as it does today and continued southeast to Delaware. However, the map does not show the present-day road from the Bradford Johnson Road at Golts to Cold Well Corner located to the north at the Delaware line. Nor does it show Black Bottom Road, which continues the Cold Well Corner Road southward (but changes names at Golts) to the Massey-Delaware road (or Massey-Dulaney's road). The 1884 church deed, however, refers to the Cold Well Road. It also mentions the "new road" leading into the Cold Well Road, indicating that Black Bottom Road had been built recently. After 1877 a spur from Hurlock Corner Road was built to Golts from where the road intersected the track; it parallels the track. Apparently the section of the Hurlock Corner Road that continued from the track southeast to Delaware, serving a black community en route, was essentially abandoned as an important thoroughfare to Delaware. It does appear on the 1860 Martenet's map. The intersection of various roads at Golts created a natural locus for a community. Today five roads intersect at Golts, creating a sort of open triangle in the center of Golts. Exactly when the Cold Well Corner Road and Black Bottom Road were built was not researched, but it is likely that they post-dated the coming of the railroad. (Note: The now often-used name of Caldwell Corner for the intersection at the Delaware line of the road north from Golts with the road east from Sassafras is incorrect; according to Mrs. Wharton, her grandparents reported stopping at the cold
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well there, where there was a pump and trough for watering horses.)

While roads were important in creating the community of Golts, the railroad was primary, making Golts a center of commerce for its section of Kent County and providing an outlet for local products. Until the coming of the railroad, the Golts area had found prosperity through farming difficult to achieve. Not only was it distant from the navigable waters of the Sassafras and Chester Rivers, but the dense forest from which farmland had been cleared tended to close back in quickly. The soil and drainage are quite unlike those in other parts of Kent County. Although the elevations are among the highest in the county and the area is close to the watershed between the Delaware River/Bay and the rivers leading to the Chesapeake Bay, as well as on the watershed between the Chester and Sassafras Rivers, the area lacks consistent slope for runoff and water collects in many locally-low sections. It was for good reason that Black Bottom Road was given its name. Even in dry periods there is dark standing water among the trees in many locations. The soil is sandy and loamy, with much decayed matter from the wet forests, but beneath the surface (varying distances) there is often a kind of low-grade iron ore that prevents percolation; it acts as a hard-pan and sometimes interferes with plowing. Even early farmers resorted to labor-intensive ditching and tiling to prevent flooded fields and be able to cultivate lands that, even when cleared, proved difficult.

Although for many years from 1835 an Eastern Shore railroad down through the Maryland counties had been discussed in the legislature, the plans were repeatedly aborted. While internal improvements languished in Maryland, by 1860 a Delaware north-south road was built, making the peninsula's main line road to Philadelphia via Wilmington instead of to Baltimore via Elkton as intended by Marylanders. The Eastern Shore of Maryland seemed in danger of becoming a backwater economically. Various options were considered for Queen Anne's, Kent, and Cecil Counties--whether to proceed with a line to Elkton or to connect with the Delaware Railroad. But the Civil War intervened, and railroad plans had to wait.

In 1867 a subsidiary of the Delaware Railroad, the Townsend Branch Railroad Company, built a line from Townsend, Delaware, (on the main line) to the state line with the hope of feeder lines from Kent County. In early 1868 work was begun for Kent & Queen Anne Railroad to run to Massey's Crossroads, Millington, Sudlersville, and Centreville. Service seems to have begun the same year. By the next year construction had begun on the Kent County Railroad from Massey's through Kennedyville and Worton to Chestertown. This line was completed by 1872, though service on the previously completed portions was begun earlier.

Running southwest from Townsend to Massey, the Townsend Branch's first station in Kent County originally was Morris Station, where the Hurlock Corner-Delaware Road intersected the railroad, about .6 mile southwest of the present-day Golts crossroads. Why the station was located there is not clear, except that here the track intersected an existing road, where a store may also have been located. The 1877 atlas map shows the station to the north of

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the intersection of railroad and road, adjacent to the home and perhaps a store of a J. A. Morris, from whom the name presumably was derived. To the east of the intersection of train track and Hurlock Corner-Delaware Road was a black community, known as Willow Hill. As early as 1860, and perhaps earlier, a black Methodist church was located there. (See report for K-628, Wesley Henry Church) In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries 60 or more black families were said to have lived there. This black community still survives but is much reduced, the young who grew up there having moved away in search of employment and more prosperous lives than seemed possible in the Golts area.

No one in the community now seems to know exactly why or when the station was relocated ~~one~~ mile to the northeast, just that it occurred. Perhaps Daniel Kent was instrumental in the change. From just a rural, farming area whose lands were not very favorable for farming, Golts seems to have grown physically until about 1900, with the surviving buildings mostly appearing to date from the last quarter of the nineteenth century. The name Golts seems to have come from the family name of a Thomas Golt, a late nineteenth-century resident, a storekeeper and perhaps an early station master who lived in a house now gone that was east of the two houses across from the church. The sign on the train station said only "Golt," but the official post office designation became Golt's Station; popular usage has shortened and corrupted the name to Golts. The station, now gone, was located in the triangle between the track and Bradford Johnson and Black Bottom Roads.

A logging industry developed to harvest the nearby dense forests, which still endure. Portable steam-powered sawmills were taken from place to place in the woods, with the logs hauled to them by mule teams and then the products or logs taken to the railroad station. According to Mrs. Reba Wharton, whose Vansant family has long been in the area, the logging was mostly to provide railroad ties and wood for paper manufacture, as well as to provide building lumber. The ubiquitous gum trees were harvested for paper manufacturers. Oak is the other important kind of tree in the Golts area forests; the few pines now present are relatively recent. Though logging is still done in the area, as a major area industry it declined after World War I. Joseph W. Peacock seems to have been a leading logging entrepreneur, with a large warehouse (now gone) at the railroad. He is said to have had the first Reo truck made expressly or converted for hauling large logs, ca. 1912-1914. He is also said to have built the three houses just southeast of the railroad track east of the Cold Well Corner Road.

On the east side of the road to the Cold Well Corner, north of the railroad track opposite the present post office, a cannery was built some time before World War I, and local farmers converted much of their arable land to tomato production. A Mr. Preston may have been the builder and first owner, and there may have been several buildings. A Mr. Woodburn of Wilson Point later bought it. Mr. Woodburn is said to have promised to build an industrial plant at Golts if the town were renamed after him, but nothing evidently came of either the plant plan or the name change. (There was another attempt,
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perhaps also related to Mr. Woodburn, about 1915, to rename Golts. The name of the post office was officially changed to Deep Wood, but the railroad refused to change its station name, and numerous community residents were opposed as well, so the Golts name was restored.) The Golts cannery was one of a number of canneries that were established along the rail line. There was also a cannery in Massey and in Van Dyke's (in nearby Delaware), though the latter evidently specialized in canning peas and corn. Processing mainly tomatoes, the Golts cannery provided seasonal employment for a large number of local people. Like the other canneries, the Golts cannery sent its products north on the train. By about 1932 the cannery was gone.

By the turn of the century Golts was said to have had four or five general stores serving the considerable population in the area, from farmers to loggers to the mostly black farm laborers and logging laborers that were needed in great numbers before the age of mechanization. The one-storey frame store across Black Bottom Road from the church survives. A post office had been in Golts from soon after the arrival of the railroad, with perhaps its first location in the railroad station. There is said to have been a blacksmith shop and livery stable near the old Peacock house southeast of the school.

With the coming of Prohibition in 1919 many Golts area residents, black and white, found the combination of the nearby dense woods, the presence of the rail line, the great distance from the county seat and the sheriff, the proximity of the state line, and the availability of local grain to be conducive to the establishment of stills and bootlegging operations. Although it is true that such were located in other parts of Kent County, including a notably large establishment on the Massey-Galena Road near present-day Route 301, there seems to have been a concentration in and around Golts. With Prohibition coinciding first with a post World War I agricultural depression and then with the Great Depression of 1929 and later, bootlegging provided a means to economic survival for many.

Before Prohibition, Kent County's position on liquor had been quite strait-laced. State law had given each county the right to decide on liquor sales, and Kent had voted to be dry (though neighboring Queen Anne's County was wet, allowing purchases there). However, for a short time after the repeal of Prohibition, until the Maryland legislature could act, there was little liquor regulation affecting Kent County. But Delaware quickly imposed a ban on Sunday sales, leading to traffic to Kent County on that day. With travel to Golts from Delaware really easier than from the rest of Kent County, several "beer parlors" opened in Golts and enjoyed considerable Delaware trade. They began to hire good bands and provide space for dancing, and Golts soon became renowned as a night spot, drawing people from considerable distances on weekend evenings.

The now-unoccupied large two-storey frame building on the Bradford Johnson Road just southeast of the train track was one of the dance halls. After the late 1940s or early 1950s it became a store only. Interestingly, it is a rhombus in plan, its front and rear ends parallel to the road and its sides
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parallel to the train track. The second storey was said to have been for blacks, the first for whites. This building's use as a dance hall seems to have predated considerably the post-Prohibition era, having apparently been built circa 1880 and early used for a dance hall, although its original purpose may have been as a cigar factory. The other large but later beer garden-dance hall is gone. It operated until about 1960 and about 1968 was burned.

For most if not all of the twentieth century there were four passenger trains daily (one in each direction on both the line to Chestertown and the line to Queen Anne's County) and several freight trains. After World War II passenger service was ended. By that time the cannery traffic was gone and the logging business had declined, and shippers along the lines were turning increasingly to trucks to transport goods. After the mail and milk contracts (which had in part supported passenger service) were lost to trucking and as travel by car became more common, the passenger trains ceased. There still are freight trains on the Townsend branch line, but service to Chestertown, at least is only once a week.

The Golts community, including the white area in the vicinity of the main crossroads around the train station, the black area to the southwest, and the white area to the southeast began to decline as a balanced community during the second quarter of the twentieth century. The school closed in 1933, with the students afterwards transported to Massey, even though there were still about 25 pupils. The church was closed as a Methodist church just before World War II, in 1939 or 1940, although Mrs. Augustus Davis opened it later in the 1940s as the Gospel Church with chiefly her family in attendance. With the cannery closed, logging no longer as important, and farming increasingly mechanized, people moved elsewhere in search of employment, especially during and after World War II. The beer-garden and dance-hall era merely postponed what seemed inevitable. Today the population of Golts is far smaller than at the turn of the century, and many of its remaining residents do not work in Kent County but commute to nearby Delaware.

9.1 Continuation Page

Eleanora M. Lynn, "A History of Education in Kent County, Maryland," unpublished typescript chapter of forthcoming history of Kent County. Rock Hall, MD: n.d.

Anecdotal history of Kent County schools, with some old school reports attached, located at Cliffs School, Chestertown. Prepared by the Kent County Retired Teachers Association, n.d.

L.E. Blauch, "The First Uniform School Law of Maryland, 1865-1868," Maryland Historical Magazine, XXVI, No. 3, (Sept. 1931), pp. 205-217.

Frederick G. Usilton, History of Kent County Maryland, 1630-1916, with Additonal 54 Chapters of the History of Kent County, Maryland, 1628-1980, by William B. Usilton, III. Chestertown, Md.: Perry Publications, 1980.

MILLINGTON QUADRANG

K-614

Coldwell Corners

Sassafras

Herring

Branch

DELAWARE
MARYLAND

CENTRAL
NEW CASTLE CO
KENT CO

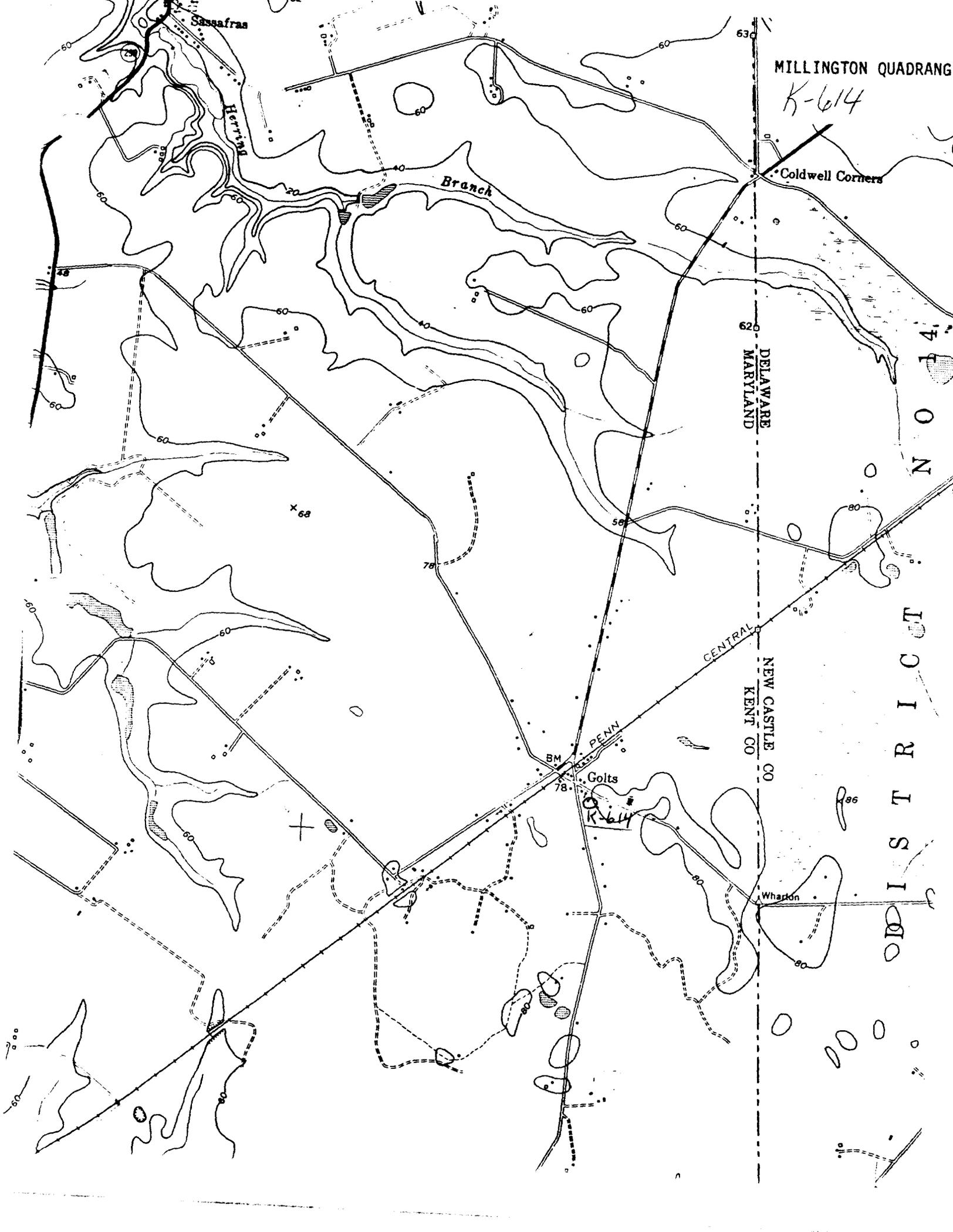
DISTRICT

NO 14

BM
78
Golts

K-614

Wharton





K-614

Golts Public School

Bradford Johnson Rd., Golts

M. Q. Fallaw - 4/1/86

View to northeast

K614-24



K614-01

K-614

Golts Public School

Bradford Johnson Rd., Golts

M. Q. Fallaw - 4/1/86

View to southeast