

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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DATE ENTERED

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC

Bethlehem Methodist Episcopal Church

AND/OR COMMON

Taylor's Island Methodist Church or Old Brick Church

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER East and west sides of Hoopers Neck Road, 1.8 miles from the bridge
to the mainland

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Taylor's Island

VICINITY OF

First

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

STATE

Maryland

CODE
24

COUNTY

Dorchester

CODE
019

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC ACQUISITION	<input type="checkbox"/> ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input type="checkbox"/> YES, RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES, UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY
			<input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
			<input type="checkbox"/> PARK
			<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
			<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
			<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
			<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Taylor's Island Methodist Church

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Taylor's Island

VICINITY OF

Maryland

STATE

21669

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Dorchester County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

High Street

CITY, TOWN

Cambridge

STATE

Maryland

21613

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

DATE

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

DESCRIPTION

D-24

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" 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 _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Bethlehem M. E. Church or Old Brick Church is located on the east side of Hoopers Neck Road, two miles north of the bridge from Taylor's Island to the mainland. The brick structure sits very close to the road with the entrance gable facing west. Across the road is a very substantial cemetery dating from the middle of the 19th century.

The main facade (west gable end) of the church has a central entrance flanked by two windows with pilasters at the corners and a pediment over all. Each leaf of the double doors has two octagonal panels at the top and two at the bottom with two long octagonal panels in the center. Above the doors are two stationary elongated octagonal panels set back from the architrave, which is a rather simple facing with a very heavy cornice supported by brackets; below this cornice is a row of dentils. The two windows have 9/9 sash and cornices similar to that over the door. At the corners are brick pilasters with wooden capitals. Between these capitals and the pediment is a frieze with dentil molding. In the center of the pediment is a stone plaque reading: Bethlehem Methodist-Episcopal Church 1857.

At the apex of the roof in the front portion of the chapel is a square base with a wide, overhanging cornice supporting an octagonal belfry. Above this is an octagonal dome with a spire superimposed, making it look like an inverted ice cream cone. The spire is covered with copper, with a star at its apex.

The church is three bays deep, with three windows on each side with 9/9 sash and louvered shutters. Above each window is a recessed, semicircular arch. On each side of the building is a stepped brick cornice painted white to match the wood cornice across the front.

The front of the chapel is built of very smooth bricks laid in all stretcher bond with a very narrow mortar joint, while the rest of the building is constructed of common brick with a rather wide mortar joint in comparison to the front brickwork. At the rear of the building, as in most small Methodist chapels along the Eastern Shore, there is a small projection along the center of the gable. This is lighted by a 4/4 sash window on each side of the projection; there is no window in the back.

The interior is composed of an entrance hall with balcony above it and a large meeting room. The hall stretches across the front (west) end of the church and has a stair to the balcony in the northwest corner. Two double doors in the partition under the balcony lead to the meeting room. This partition is probably not original, but seems very early.

The meeting room retains the original pews divided by two aisles. There is a kerosene stove in the center of each side bank of pews. The projection described above from the exterior is just behind the altar. Some Victorian furniture remains in the church, in particular several benches behind the altar. The original organ, now electrified, sits in the southeast corner. A period kerosene fixture of five lamps hangs from the center of the ceiling; one kerosene lamp is attached to each of the surrounds on the east and center windows (the east ones have been electrified.)

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET #1.

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Bethlehem Methodist-Episcopal Church
Dorchester County

CONTINUATION SHEET Maryland

ITEM NUMBER 7

PAGE 1

(DESCRIPTION, continued)

Early 20th century electric lights are also hung from the ceiling.

The balcony is supported by a single central column. There are recessed plastered arches above the large windows in both side walls.

SIGNIFICANCE

D-24

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1857

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

SIGNIFICANCE

Architecturally, Bethlehem Church is the best example of a mid-19th century Methodist chapel in Dorchester County. It is also the only one to be built of brick and retains its original interior, down to the kerosene lamps and chandelier. The building is a simple, well constructed structure typical of the mid-19th century in form and detail.

This site has been used by the Methodists since the 18th century and is the first site connected with this denomination in Dorchester County. The fact that Bethlehem was one of the Methodist churches to split from the main church during the schism over slavery reflects the general conservatism of the Eastern Shore at that time, as well as the belief in the plantation system in this particular area of the Shore.

HISTORY

The first chapel built on this site was donated by Moses and Elizabeth LeCompte. The deed granting the land and chapel to the trustees of the church is dated September 15, 1787, making it the oldest on record for Methodist Episcopal Church land in Dorchester County. The trustees at that time were Benjamin Keenes, Jr., William Geozhagan, Thomas Hooper, John Ashcom Travers, Peter Harrington, John Aaron, John Geogehan, John Robson, and Isaac Creighton. The deed reads that they are the "Trustees appointed to take the care and management of the Chapel lately built on Taylors for the use of the Ministers belonging to the Methodist Episcopal Church." (NH 9/411.)

The chapel was built on a half-acre of the tract Patricks Progress. The trustees were "to care for the chapel and at all times admit those appointed by yearly conference of Methodists in America to preach and expound God's word and for no other purpose."

According to E. C. Hallman's book, The Garden of Methodism, Bethlehem Methodist Episcopal Church was the first church built by the Methodists in Dorchester. The congregation organized in 1781 in Thomas Wollen's home and had their first chapel by 1787. This early building was sold when the present brick structure was built in 1857. The new church was "improved" in 1863 for \$900.

In 1860 the Methodist Episcopal Church divided over the slavery issue. The Peninsula Conference of the Church divided, and part went with the Baltimore Conference and part with the Virginia Conference. Sixteen charges on the Eastern Shore joined the Methodist Episcopal Church South and Bethlehem was one of them.

5761 III SE
(HUDSON)

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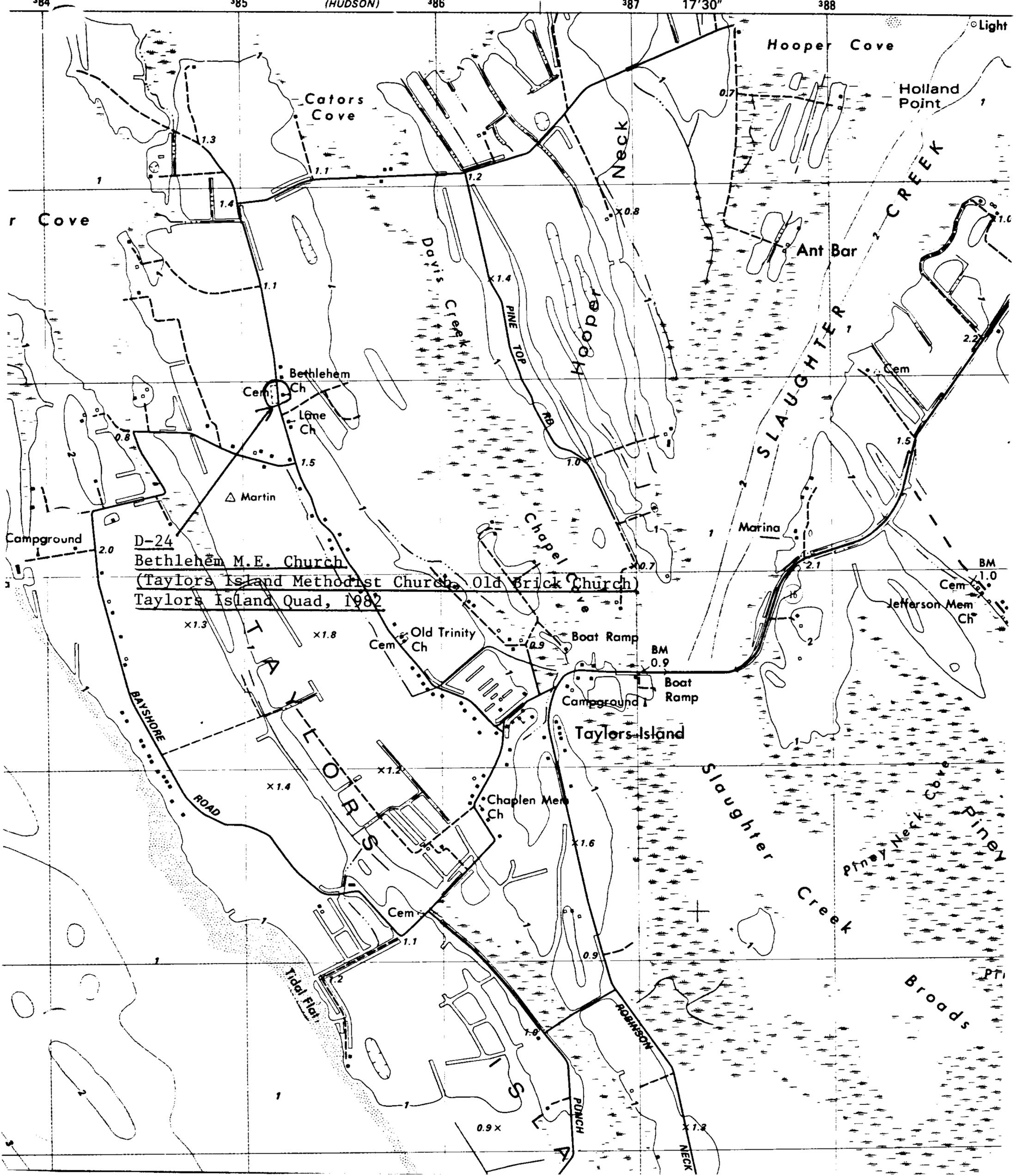
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386

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17'30"

388



D-24
 Bethlehem M.E. Church
 (Taylors Island Methodist Church, Old Brick Church)
 Taylors Island Quad, 1982

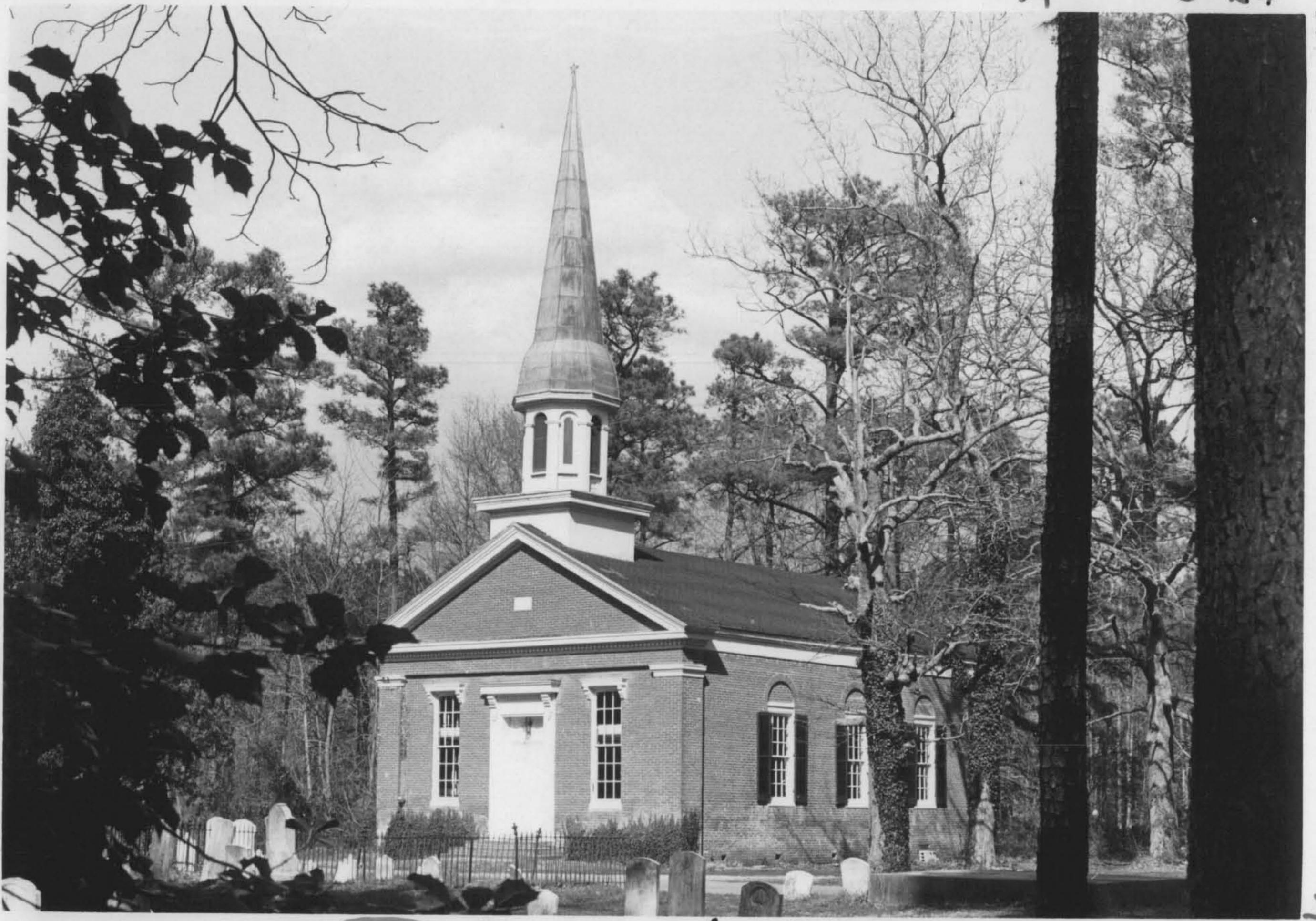
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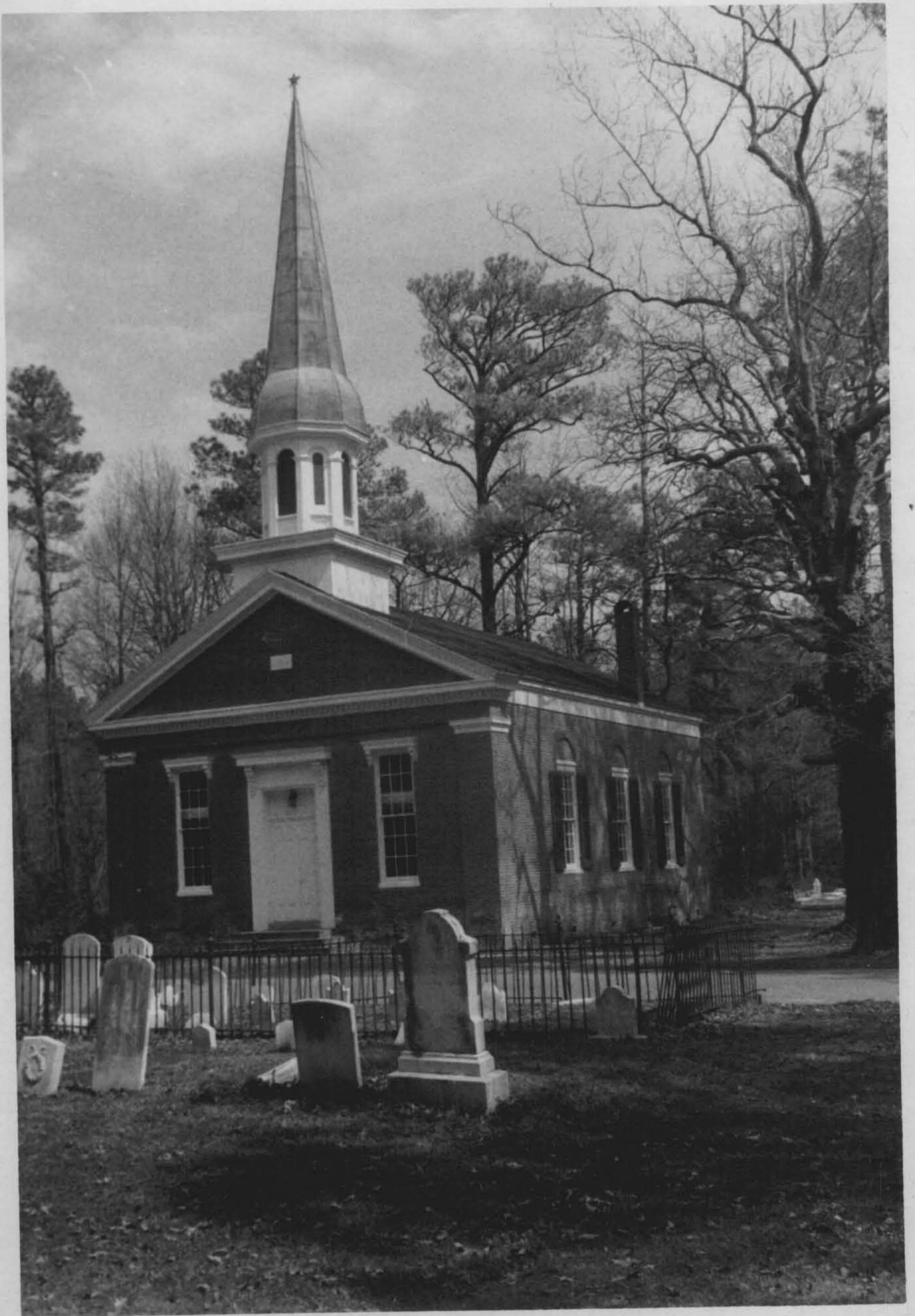
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Bethlehem Church

D-24

M. Bourne Spring 1975



D-24