

T-55

Old Wye Church (Wye Chapel; St. Luke's, Wye)

Architectural Survey File

This is the architectural survey file for this MIHP record. The survey file is organized reverse-chronological (that is, with the latest material on top). It contains all MIHP inventory forms, National Register nomination forms, determinations of eligibility (DOE) forms, and accompanying documentation such as photographs and maps.

Users should be aware that additional undigitized material about this property may be found in on-site architectural reports, copies of HABS/HAER or other documentation, drawings, and the “vertical files” at the MHT Library in Crownsville. The vertical files may include newspaper clippings, field notes, draft versions of forms and architectural reports, photographs, maps, and drawings. Researchers who need a thorough understanding of this property should plan to visit the MHT Library as part of their research project; look at the MHT web site (mht.maryland.gov) for details about how to make an appointment.

All material is property of the Maryland Historical Trust.

Last Updated: 04-05-2004

United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service

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National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

received

date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*

Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Wye Chapel; St. Luke's, Wye

and or common Old Wye Church (preferred)

2. Location

street & number Queenstown-Easton Road (MD Rte. 662) n/a not for publication

city, town Wye Mills n/a vicinity of congressional district First

state Maryland code 24 county Talbot code 041

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 type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial <input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in process	<input type="checkbox"/> educational <input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military <input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Vestry of Wye Parish

street & number P. O. Box 98

city, town Wye Mills n/a vicinity of state Maryland 21679

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Talbot County Courthouse

street & number

city, town Easton state Maryland 21601

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Maryland Historical Trust

Historic Sites Inventory

has this property been determined eligible? ☐ yes ☒ no

date January 1977

☐ federal ☒ state ☐ county ☐ local

depository for survey records

Maryland Historical Trust, 21 State Circle

city, town Annapolis

state Maryland 21401

7. Description

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

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Number of Resources		Number of previously listed
Contributing	Noncontributing	National Register properties
<u>2</u>	<u>2</u> buildings	included in this nomination: <u>0</u>
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> sites	
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> structures	Original and historic functions
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> objects	and uses: religious
<u>2</u>	<u>2</u> Total	

DESCRIPTION SUMMARY:

Old Wye Church is a one-story, gable-roofed, rectangular brick structure located in the village of Wye Mills in Talbot County, Maryland. The building was originally constructed in 1717-1721, extensively renovated in 1854, and restored in 1947-1949 to its eighteenth century appearance. The entrance is centered in the west gable, and features a (restored) Doric enframement with fluted pilasters supporting a full entablature. A large circular window (added in 1949) is centered in the gable above the entrance, and flanked by a small circular window on either side. The side elevations are four bays wide, defined by shouldered buttresses and holding semicircular-arched 12/16 sash. The main block of the church measures approximately 25' x 50'; a 16' x 18' chancel extends from the east gable. The chancel is one bay wide, with a Palladian window in its gable end. A small c. 1854 shed-roofed sacristy is attached to the south side of the chancel. On the interior, three rows of box pews are disposed according to a plan drawn in 1723. A hanging pulpit is centered on the north wall and is flanked by a lectern and reading desk. In the chancel, the altar rests on an elevated platform, behind the altar rail with turned balusters. The ceilings of both areas are arched, and the nave floor is paved with brick. A gallery spans the west end of the nave. Northwest of the church stands a reconstruction of the 1761-1763 Vestry House, on its original foundation. Extensive documentary records, coupled with surviving architectural evidence, guided the 1947-1949 restoration. The modern parish house and rectory do not contribute to the significance of the resource.

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Continuation sheet Old Wye Church Item number 7 Page 1
Talbot County, Maryland

GENERAL DESCRIPTION:

Old Wye Church is a one-story rectangular brick structure located on the west side of Maryland Route 662 in the village of Wye Mills, Talbot County, Maryland. The building was originally constructed in 1721, extensively renovated in 1854, and restored in 1947-1949 to its eighteenth century appearance.

The building faces west, and measures approximately 25' x 50' with a 16' x 18' chancel extending from the east gable. The walls are laid in Flemish bond above a chamfered water table and English bond below. The entrance is centered in the west gable, and consists of double leaf doors with four panels each framed by a Doric surround, with fluted pilasters supporting a full entablature with triglyph-and-metope frieze. The entrance treatment is a conjectural reconstruction. Above the entrance, a large circular window (added in the 1949 restoration) is flanked by two small circular windows called for in the original 1717 specifications for the building. The brickwork of the west gable features random glazed headers. Tapered rakeboards define the shingle-clad gable roof.

The side elevations are four bays wide; each bay holds a semicircular-arched 12/16 sash window with paneled shutters. Glazed headers are employed in the window arches. Shouldered buttresses with tiled weatherings are located between the bays and at the corners of the building. A simple boxed cornice defines the eaves.

The one-bay-wide chancel extends from the east gable; a semicircular-arched 6/12 sash window pierces its north wall, and a small shed-roofed sacristy with an 8-panel door and semicircular transom has been attached to its south side. The east gable of the chancel is lighted by a Palladian window.

The interior had been extensively altered in the 1854 renovation, and has been restored to its 18th century appearance based on surviving architectural evidence and documentary records. There are three rows of box pews, disposed according to a plan drawn in 1723. A hanging pulpit is centered on the north wall, and flanked by a lectern and reading desk. The chancel holds the altar on an elevated platform, behind the altar rail with turned balusters. Both the nave and chancel have arched ceilings. All these features were specified in the original construction contract of 1717, which is preserved in the vestry records (see section 8). Vestry records also document the brick paving of the floor (1730), and the construction of the gallery spanning the west wall (1792). Surviving architectural evidence was important in determining the locations and form of interior trim elements.

See Continuation Sheet No. 2

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Continuation sheet Old Wye Church Item number 7 Page 2
Talbot County, Maryland

GENERAL DESCRIPTION (continued)

A small, shed-roofed sacristy, added to the south wall of the chancel circa 1854, was retained in the 1947-1949 restoration.

Northwest of the church is a frame Vestry House, a replica of a structure originally built in 1761-1763 which had disappeared by the mid-19th century. The building is three bays wide by one bay deep, and faces east. The central entrance has a rectangular transom, and is flanked by 12/12 sash windows. An interior brick chimney rises from the peak of the south gable; the siding is interrupted, exposing the chimney back. The interior contains a single room; decorative detailing follows the traditions of the mid-18th century in the region. The building was reconstructed on its original foundation, according to specifications preserved in the vestry records; it houses a collection of books, maps, and artifacts related to the history of Wye Parish. The modern heating plant for both structures was located in a basement below the Vestry House, to utilize a chimney known to have existed; services are connected to the church building by underground conduits.

Also on the property are a modern parish house located north of the church, and a modern rectory to the south; these buildings do not contribute to the significance of the resource.

8. Significance

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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 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 type="checkbox"/> social/
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates	built 1717-1721 restored 1947-1949	Builder Architect	William Elbert, builder, 1721 William Graves Perry, restoration architect 1949
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Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Applicable Criteria: A, C

Applicable Exception: A

Level of Significance for evaluation: local

SIGNIFICANCE SUMMARY:

Old Wye Church is significant for its architecture, and for its association with the early development of the Episcopal religion in Maryland. Even counting several ruins, fewer than a dozen 18th century brick churches survive in Maryland to reflect the period 1692-1776 when the Anglican faith was the colony's official, established religion. Old Wye Church is the only church of this period which remains standing in Talbot County (one other structure, White Marsh Church, survives only in ruins). The vestry records for St. Paul's (later Wye) Parish document all phases and aspects of the construction, improvement, maintenance, furnishing, and renovation of Old Wye Church in considerable detail; these sources, and surviving architectural evidence, contributed to the authenticity of the 1947-1949 restoration. The church retains considerable integrity, and embodies the distinctive characteristics of Georgian Anglican architecture in its brick construction (Flemish bond above a chamfered water table, English bond below, with glazed headers highlighting the principal facade and the window arches); semicircular-arched window openings; shouldered buttresses; rectangular plan and simple massing.

For History and Supporting Documentation, see Continuation Sheet No. 3

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Continuation sheet Old Wye Church
Talbot County, Maryland Item number 8 Page 3

HISTORY AND SUPPORT:

¹The following account is abstracted from Elizabeth Merrit, Old Wye Church 1694-1949 (Baltimore: Maryland Historical Society, 1954).

Vestry records of St. Paul's Parish, from which Wye Parish was created in 1860, begin in 1694, and provide a detailed account of the construction, maintenance, improvements, and furnishings of Old Wye Church.¹ The first mention of a chapel on the site of Old Wye appears in November, 1698, when the vestry proposes "the Dimentions of the Church (wch is to be erected in Wye) Vizt forty feet in length, & twenty-five feet in breadth, & fifteen feet in the hight, the length & breadth so to be within the walls." This plan was never realized, presumably because funds were lacking: in 1712 the vestry agreed to solicit contributions so that "a church fabrick could be erected." By 1717 the vestry had collected £100 sterling and subscriptions of 60,000 pounds of tobacco, and on October 28 of that year contracted with William Elbert, Carpenter, for

... the building of a Church att the head of Wye River
Either where the old Church stands or hard by the same
The length thereof being fifty foot in the Clear and in
the breadth five and Twenty foot in the Clear in heighth
Sixteen foot pitch the End building att the East End
Eighteen by Sixteen in the Clear of a proportionable
height with the other building being the length of three
bricks thick att the foundation to the Water Table from
the water Table up to the bottom of the window two bricks
and a half and from thence two bricks up to the top of
the Square Setting three windows on Each side of the
said Church betwixt Seven and Eight foot high two Ovall
windows to be att the West End above the Square att the
East End a large Window Ovall at the head a window in Each
side proportionable the said windows being three foot wide
of Each side suported by Sufficient palasters or botterises
as shall be thought fitt with a Good Sufficient Roof
Arch'd underneath Covered with Shingles of white Oak or
Cyprus which the Workman shall think fitt to be plaistered
in the inside and Glased with Slyding sashes The lower
part in the Eastern building to fix an Alter Table Raised
three Steps high and Sett about with Rails and turn
banisters in the body of the Church to Erect a pulpitt and
Reading Desk."

See Continuation Sheet No. 4

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Continuation sheet Old Wye Church Talbot County, Maryland Item number 8 Page 4

HISTORY AND SUPPORT (continued)

The church was opened for worship on St. Luke's Day, October, 18, 1721. From that date through the 19th century, vestry records document the changing condition of the structure. The decades 1720-1750 saw a series of improvements and repairs to the newly-constructed building. The church was primed and tarred in 1723, and again in 1725. A plank floor completed shortly after the church opened was replaced with brick paving in 1730. Windows required frequent attention, employing the services of glaziers in 1726, 1732, and 1745. Shutters were purchased within six months of the church's opening; new hardware was provided in 1731, and new shutters were made in 1745. The churchyard was fenced in 1726; in 1745, the earlier tarred and painted heart poplar palings were replaced with chestnut, and the cedar or locust posts were renewed.

Also during this period, new furnishings were acquired for the church and recorded by the vestry. The seating plan was drawn in 1723 and recorded in 1725, consisting of thirty box pews disposed around the pulpit; two more pews were authorized in 1733. In 1729, books were ordered from Annapolis, including "one table of Marriages printed on parchment lbs 30 tobco. Two Record Books with ten quire of paper Each and one Compleat Body of Law to this time all well bound and tituled on the back with Gold Leaf...." A bible and Common Prayer Book were ordered in 1730. In 1735, vestry proceedings were transcribed into the new record books. References to the church silver, table cloth, and surplice also appear in the records, completing the account of the property associated with the church in the 18th century.

In 1762, Nehemiah Noble received £62 current money, "the sum for building & compleating the Vestry House" according to specifications recorded the previous year: "whole Framed twenty by eighteen feet, eight feet pitch, with a good Brick Chimney & two Sash Windows &c." In 1765, the vestry received a grant from the Assembly for 30,000 pounds of tobacco, "to be applyed towards building an Addition and Galleries" to the chapel; these funds, however, proved insufficient, and work was limited to repairs to the windows, pulpit, and reading desk and resheathing the roof with cypress shingles. The reconstruction of Old Chester Church at Hibernia, the parish church of St. Paul's Parish, monopolized the attention and funds of the parish for the remainder of the century, so that no further substantial improvements and repairs to Old Wye were made until 1792, when a gallery was added.

The general decline in the fortunes of the Episcopal Church in Maryland following the Revolution was manifest at Old Wye through dwindling membership and revenues. Vestry meetings became increasingly infrequent, and the disused chapel began to deteriorate. After 1829, regular services were no longer held at Old Wye. Visiting the chapel in the 1840s, Bishop Whittington found it had become a stable; later, in 1853, Bishop Whitehouse reported that the church was "fast becoming roofless, and if neglected much longer, will be a hopeless ruin." By this time, the congregation had revived sufficiently to underwrite repairs to the chapel, and in 1854 a major renovation was carried out. A slate

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Continuation sheet Old Wye Church
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HISTORY AND SUPPORT (continued)

roof with overhanging eaves was put on, and the outside stairs to the gallery removed; windows were reglazed with stained glass, and bench pews replaced the earlier box pews.

After the turn of the 20th century, services were held only occasionally at Wye Church, and the building once again fell into disrepair. In 1947, Arthur A. Houghton, Jr., presented the vestry with a proposal to restore the church to its 18th century configuration. The architect for the restoration, William G. Perry, utilized existing architectural evidence as well as documentary records to carry out a highly sympathetic campaign. The present exterior appearance of the church is generally faithful to the 1717 specifications with the exception of the large round window centered in the west gable, which was added during the 1947-1949 restoration in order to provide additional light to the gallery.

When restoration work began in 1947, the church stood alone on its site, all above-ground evidence of the Vestry House having disappeared by the mid-19th century. The original walls substantially remained, and existing brickwork provided evidence for bonding patterns, mortar composition, and pointing. The slate roof with overhanging eaves, three chimneys, and exterior wood trim reflected the major renovation of 1854, as did the interior roof framing, flooring, wainscoting, and pews.

Surviving evidence in the interior fabric guided the restoration of the arched ceilings of the nave and chancel. Nailers disclosed the location of dado paneling, interior cornices, chancel rail and altar platform, and putlock holes were found for the pulpit canopy. Evidence also existed for the details of the construction of the 1792 gallery. Pews are disposed according to the plan of 1723.

The foundation for the Vestry House was located, and this structure was reconstructed on its original site according to the 1761 specifications. The reconstructed Vestry House contains a collection of the 17th and 18th century books, maps, and artifacts, and houses the heating plant which serves the church through an underground conduit.

9. Major Bibliographical References

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See Continuation Sheet No. 7

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property approx. 3.5 acresQuadrangle name Wye Mills, MarylandQuadrangle scale 1:24,000

UMT References

A

1	8	4	0	6	4	0	0	4	3	1	0	0	6	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

B

Zone		Easting				Northing								

C

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D

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E

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F

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G

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H

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Verbal boundary description and justification

See Continuation Sheet No. 7

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	n/a	code	county	code
-------	-----	------	--------	------

state	code	county	code
-------	------	--------	------

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Peter Kurtze with contributions by Dicran Berberianorganization Maryland Historical Trustdate March 1984street & number 21 State Circletelephone (301) 269-2438city or town Annapolisstate Maryland 21401

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

☐ national ☐ state ☒ local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

6-29-84title STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER

date

For HCRS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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National Park Service

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Continuation sheet Old Wye Church
Talbot County, Maryland Item number 9 and 10 Page 6

MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Emory, Frederick. Queen Anne's County, Maryland. (Baltimore: Maryland Historical Society, 1950).

Forman, Henry Chandlee. Old Buildings, Gardens, and Furniture in Tidewater Maryland. (Cambridge, MD: Tidewater Publishers, 1964).

Merritt, Elizabeth. Old Wye Church 1694-1949. (Baltimore: Maryland Historical Society, 1954).

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION:

Boundaries are depicted on the attached plat.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION:

The nominated property, approximately 3.5 acres, encompasses the resource within its immediate setting, comprising the churchyard historically associated with the church and vestry house.

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PLAN OF OLD WYE CHURCH CEMETERY

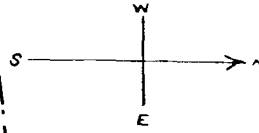
AS ACCEPTED BY

THE VESTRY OF WYE PARISH

AUGUST 24, 1950

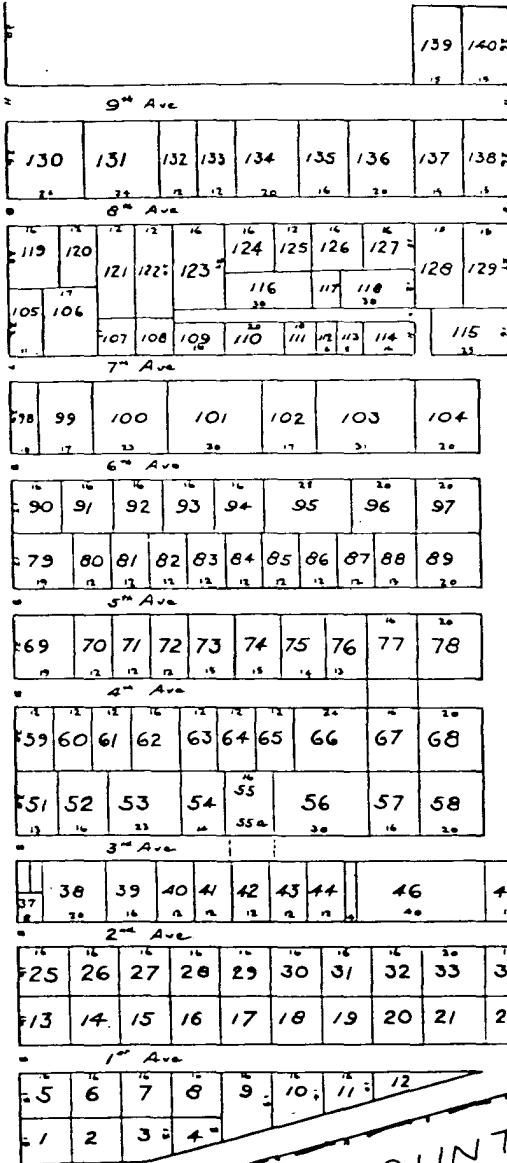
CREEK BED

368 ft

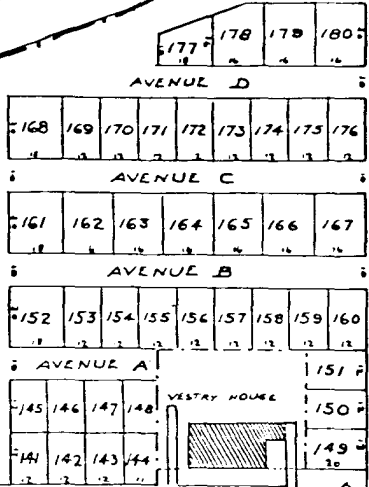


NATIONAL
REGISTER
BOUNDARY
1984

397 ft



OLD
WYE
CHURCH



NORTH AVENUE

410 ft

COUNTY ROAD
MARYLAND ROUTE 662

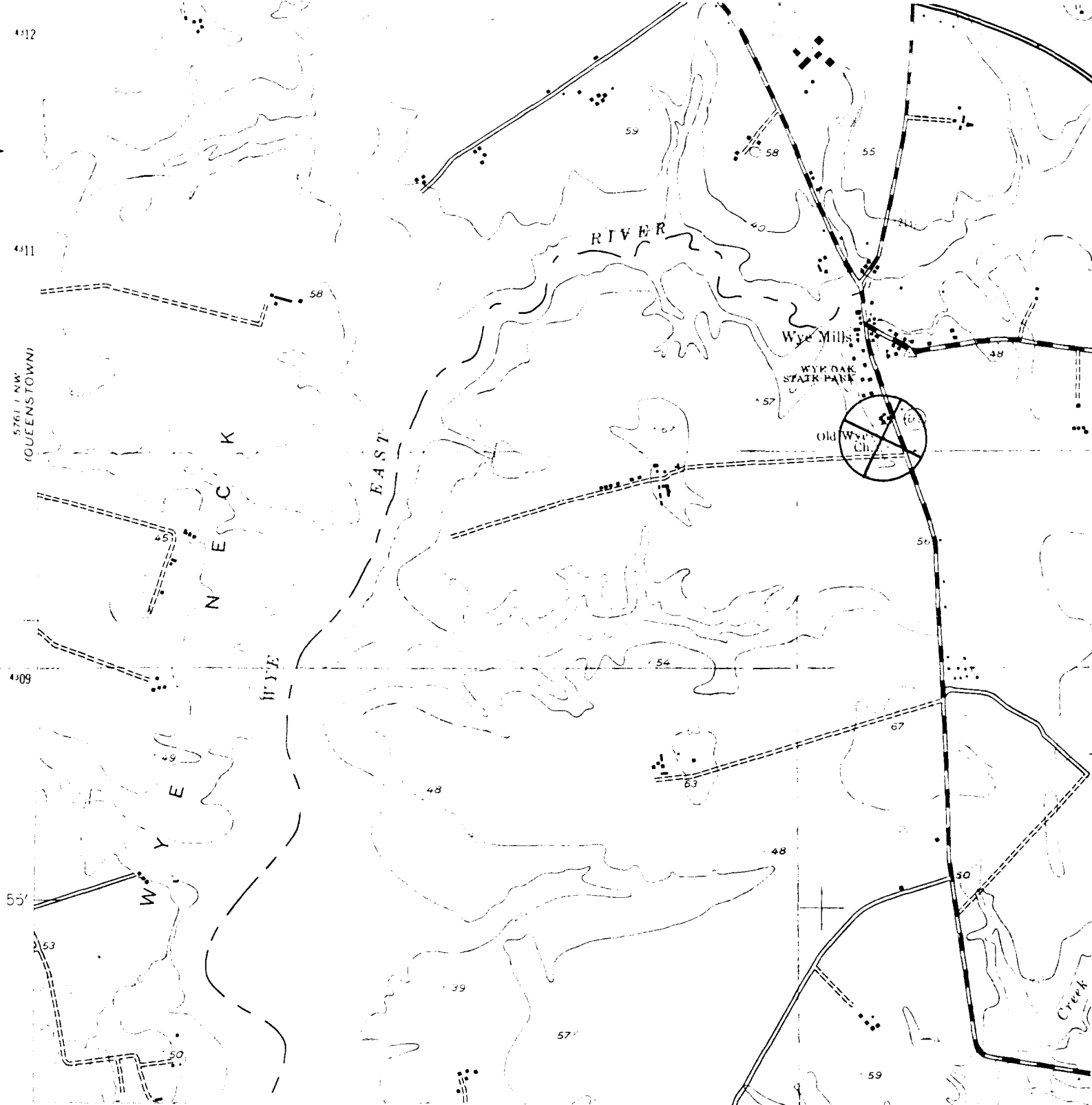
SCALE: 1" = 30'
3.56± ACRES

C. W. KELLOGG, S.W.
J. E. BRYAN, J.W.
W. I. TUTTLE, TREAS.
MRS. FRANK DELAHAY, REG.
C. F. CROWDER
ALBERT GREAVES
CARL L'ORANGE
ARTHUR SOUTHARD
THOMAS DONALDSON,
ACTING RECTOR

RECORDED AT THE COURTHOUSE OF TALBOT COUNTY, EASTON, MARYLAND, SEP 26 1950

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OLD WYE CHURCH
TALBOT COUNTY,
MARYLAND

18-406400-
4310060





.16 x 1.48

50% 55

Wye Church

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M. Bourne July 1975



Wye Church

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