

CAPSULE SUMMARY
Willing Helper's Society Hall (CH: 546)
1002 Washington Avenue
Charles County, Maryland

Built in 1904, the Willing Helper's Society Hall at 1002 Washington Avenue reflects aspects of African-American history and culture in southern Maryland. The Willing Helper's and Relief Society of Charles County is a benevolent organization founded during the first quarter of the 20th century to provide financial assistance to members of the local African-American community. Devoid of stylistic embellishments, the building serves an essential roll in the community, rather than making an architectural statement that would require funding the society could utilize in helping local African-American residents. It was constructed in circa 1904 by the Society on property purchased from Robert and Ann L. Chapman.

The wood frame meeting hall is one-and-a-half-stories in height, measuring two bays wide and five bays deep. The structure is augmented by circa 1925 concrete block addition that wraps around the rear and north side of the main block. Although the original building was rectangular in plan, the hall with its addition currently has an L-shaped footprint and a concrete block foundation. The original part of building has wood frame walls clad with aluminum siding and a front gable roof of standing seam.

MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST
MD INVENTORY OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES

Inventory No. CH:546

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1. Name of Property

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historic name Willing Helper's Society Hall
common/other name _____

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2. Location

=====

street & number 1002 Washington Avenue not for publication _____
city or town La Plata vicinity _____ state Maryland code MD
county Charles County code 17 zip code 20646

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3. State/Federal Agency Certification N/A

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4. National Park Service Certification N/A

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5. Classification

=====

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>0</u>	buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

Is this property listed in the National Register?

Yes _____ Name of Listing _____
No

Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties
Willing Helper's Society Hall
1002 Washington Avenue
Charles County, Maryland

Inventory No. CH: 546
Page 2

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6. Function or Use
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Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: SOCIAL Sub: Meeting Hall

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: SOCIAL Sub: Meeting Hall

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7. Description
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Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

Vernacular

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

Foundation Solid: Concrete Block

Roof Gable: Standing Seam Metal

Walls Wood Frame: Aluminum Siding

other Concrete Blocks

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
Willing Helper's Society Hall
1002 Washington Avenue
Charles County, Maryland

Inventory No. CH: 546
Page 4

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Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Ethnic Heritage

Period of Significance 1904-1949

Significant Dates 1904

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Cultural Affiliation Undefined

Architect/Builder Unknown

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

See Continuation Sheet No. 8-1

Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties
Willing Helper's Society Hall
1002 Washington Avenue
Charles County, Maryland

Inventory No. CH: 546
Page 5

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9. Major Bibliographical References

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

Carley, Rachel. *The Visual Dictionary of American Domestic Architecture*. New York, NY: Henry Holt and Company, 1994.

Charles County Land and Will Records. Charles County Courthouse and the Maryland State Archives, Annapolis, Maryland.

Hicks, Lelia. Telephone conversation with Robin J. Weidlich, 22 November 1999.

McAlester, Virginia and Lee. *A Field Guide to American Houses*. New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985.

Rivoire, J. Richard. *Homeplaces: Traditional Domestic Architecture of Charles County, Maryland*. Crownsville, MD: Maryland Historical Trust, 1990.

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10. Geographical Data

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Acreage of Property 1.25 acres

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

The property at 1002 Washington Avenue is designated as Parcel 110, Grid 8 as indicated on Map 33.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The property at 1002 Washington Avenue has historically been associated with Parcel 110 since the building's construction in 1904.

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11. Form Prepared By

=====

name/title R. Weidlich and C. Novelli, Architectural Historians
organization EHT Traceries, Inc. date July 9, 1999
street & number 5420 Western Avenue telephone 301/656-5283
city or town Chevy Chase state MD zip code 20815

=====

12. Property Owner

=====

name Willing Helpers Society, Charles County, c/o Lelia Hicks street
& number 5660 Washington Avenue telephone _____
city or town La Plata state MD zip code 20646

Section 7 Page 1

Willing Helper's Society Hall
name of property
Charles County, Maryland
county and state

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The wood frame meeting hall at 1002 Washington Avenue is located on a level, grassy lot on the east side of the road, with mature trees and a gravel driveway. Built in 1904, this vernacular structure is one-and-a-half-stories in height, measuring two bays wide and five bays deep. The structure is augmented by circa 1925 concrete block addition that wraps around the rear and north side of the main block. Although the original building was rectangular in plan, the hall with its addition currently has an L-shaped footprint and a concrete block foundation. The original part of building has wood frame walls clad with aluminum siding; the side addition is smooth-faced concrete block. The main block of the building has a front gable, standing seam metal roof, while the side addition has a hipped, standing seam metal roof. The concrete block addition along the north elevation creates a cat-slide roof with that the main block.

EXTERIOR DESCRIPTION:

The façade, or the west elevation of the building, includes the two-bay wide front of original building and the one-bay wide north addition. The main block of the hall features a double-leaf panel-and-light metal door and a very small two-light sliding metal window. The north addition also has a two-light sliding metal window at the same height as that on the main block. The modern doors of the entry are accessed by a concrete pad that slopes from the south.

The south elevation is comprised of a three-bay section of the original hall, which has three fixed two-light metal windows that are step just below the slightly overhanging eaves of the roof. Adjoining the main block at the south elevation is the hipped roof addition. The one-bay wide addition of concrete block is three-bays wide with a central entry. The opening holds a flush single-leaf door flanked by six-light metal hopper window with rowlock brick sills. Similarly, the south elevation of the addition has a single fixed six-light metal window with a rowlock brick sill.

The rear elevation is comprised (from south to north) of the three-bay wide addition, the two-bay wide original hall, and the one-bay wide north side addition. The south addition contains two two-light sliding windows with rowlock brick sills and a flush single-

MARYLAND INVENTORY OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Inventory No. CH: 546

Section 7 Page 2

Willing Helper's Society Hall
name of property
Charles County, Maryland
county and state

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leaf metal door. Under the steeply pitched gable roof, the original part of the hall has a single-leaf flush metal door and a two-light sliding window. The north side addition also has a two-light sliding window set at the same height.

The north elevation consists of the five-bay wide north addition, which is symmetrically pierced with five two-light metal windows. The openings are set directly under the slightly overhanging eave of the standing seam cat-slide roof.

Section 8 Page 1

Willing Helper's Society Hall
name of property
Charles County, Maryland
county and state

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Built in 1904, the Willing Helper's Society Hall reflects aspects of African-American history and culture in southern Maryland. The Willing Helper's and Relief Society is a local, non-profit benevolent organization founded in 1903 to provide financial assistance to members of the local African-American community. Still active today, the relief organization raises money to help needy African Americans in Charles County pay hospital and doctor bills. To raise monies, the organization holds benefit dinners and rents the hall for dinners, receptions, and other social events. The Willing Helper's and Relief Society of Charles County constructed the hall in circa 1904 on property purchased from Robert F. and Ann L. Chapman. Member George Jones, the first African American undertaker in Charles County, helped construct the hall.¹ The wood frame structure is devoid of stylistic embellishments, serving an essential roll for the community rather than making an architectural statement that would require funding the society could utilize in helping local African-American residents.

In the years following the Civil War, newly freed African-Americans bonded together in close-knit communities tied together by social support networks such as churches, schools, and fraternal/social associations. The education of former slaves and their children formed an important element of these early African-American communities. Philanthropic organizations and the Freedmen's Bureau often assisted in the establishment of grade and technical schools by providing funds and materials for the construction of buildings. These buildings often served as churches as well as schools, and functioned as focal points for growing African-American communities. The mobility of African-Americans was limited by poverty, lack of access to transportation, and segregation laws. Churches, therefore, fulfilled the religious, educational, political, and social needs of their communities. Beneficial societies such as Willing Helper's Society provided additional economic support.

¹ Lelia Hicks, telephone conversation with Robin J. Weidlich, 22 November 1999.

MARYLAND INVENTORY OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Inventory No. CH: 546

Section 8 Page 2

Willing Helper's Society Hall
name of property
Charles County, Maryland
county and state

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National Register Evaluation:

The Willing Helper's Society Building is eligible due to the fact that it meets National Register Criteria A. Preliminary research has revealed a direct association between the building and the African-American community of Charles County, through events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history (Criterion A). With regard to Criteria B, C, and D, the building does not meet the National Register criteria. It has not been associated with the lives of persons significant in our past (Criterion B). Although the building provides an example of vernacular rural architecture, it is neither unusual nor distinguished; it does not represent the work of a master or display high artistic merit (Criterion C). There is no evidence that the property is likely to yield information important in history or prehistory (Criterion D). Thus, the property is National Register-eligible under Criterion A.

MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST

Eligibility recommended Not Recommended

Comments:

Review, OPS: *W. S. ...* Date: *8/3/2000*

Reviewer, NR Program: *B. Kuntz* Date: *8/14/00*

MARYLAND INVENTORY OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Inventory No. CH: 546

Willing Helper's Society Hall
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):

Architecture, Landscape, and
Community Planning
Social/Educational/Cultural

RESOURCE TYPE(S)

Category: Building

Historic Environment: Rural

Historic Function (s): SOCIAL/Meeting Hall

Known Design Source: Unknown

MARYLAND INVENTORY OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Inventory No. CH: 546

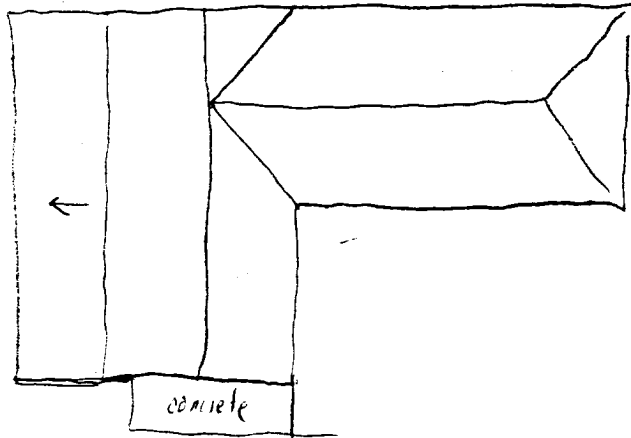
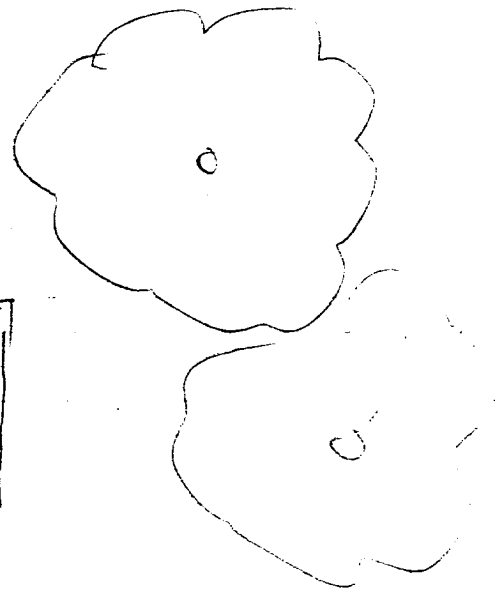
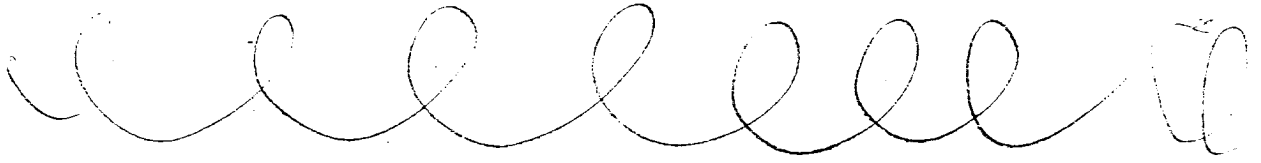
Willing Helper's Society Hall
name of property
Charles County, Maryland
county and state

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Chain of Title:

September 24, 1904:

Robert F. and Ann L. Chapman to The Willing
Helpers and Relief Society of Charles County
Land Records for Charles County
Liber 15 Folio 378

trees



Washington Ave.

Willing Helpers Society Ch. 546
1002 Washington Avenue

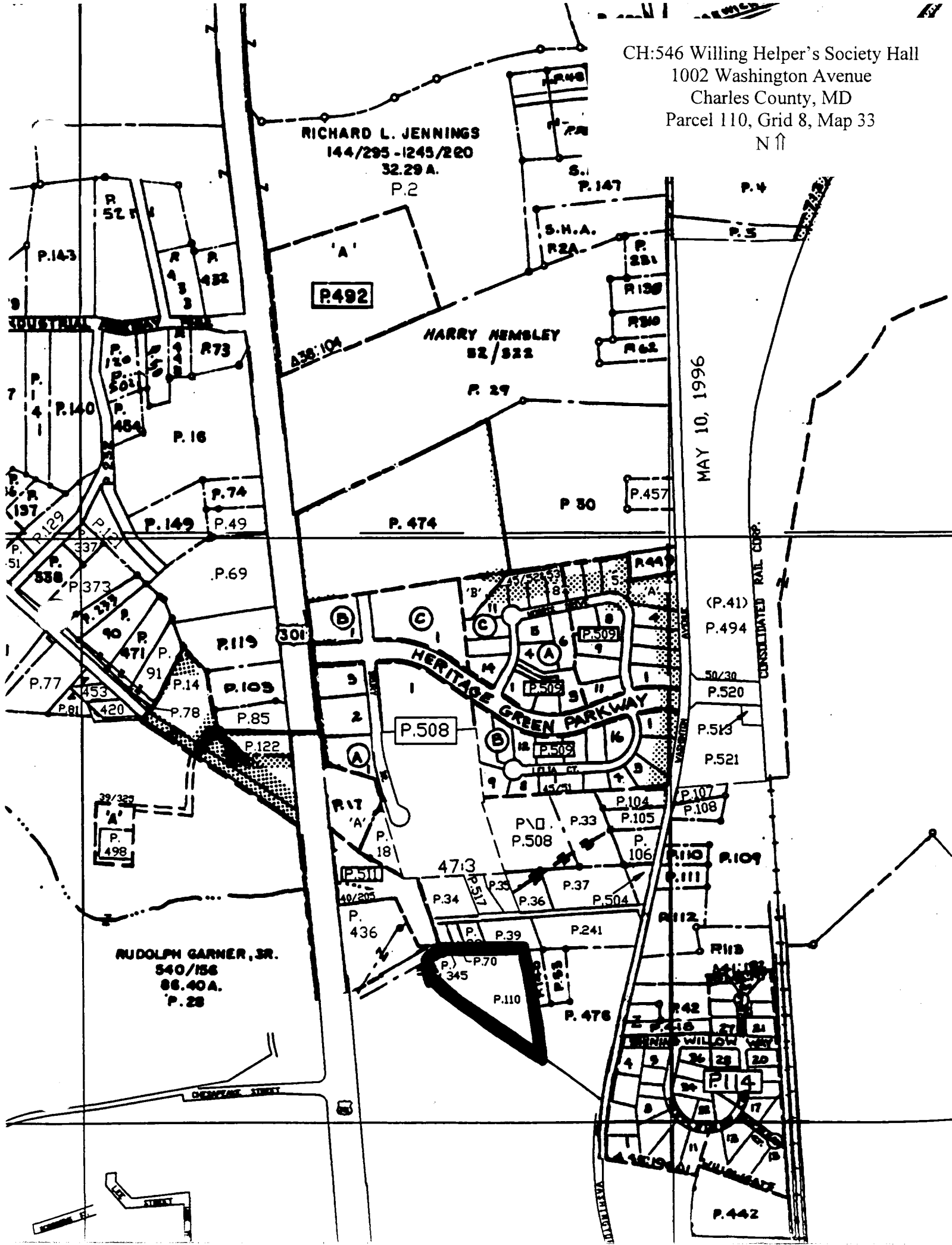
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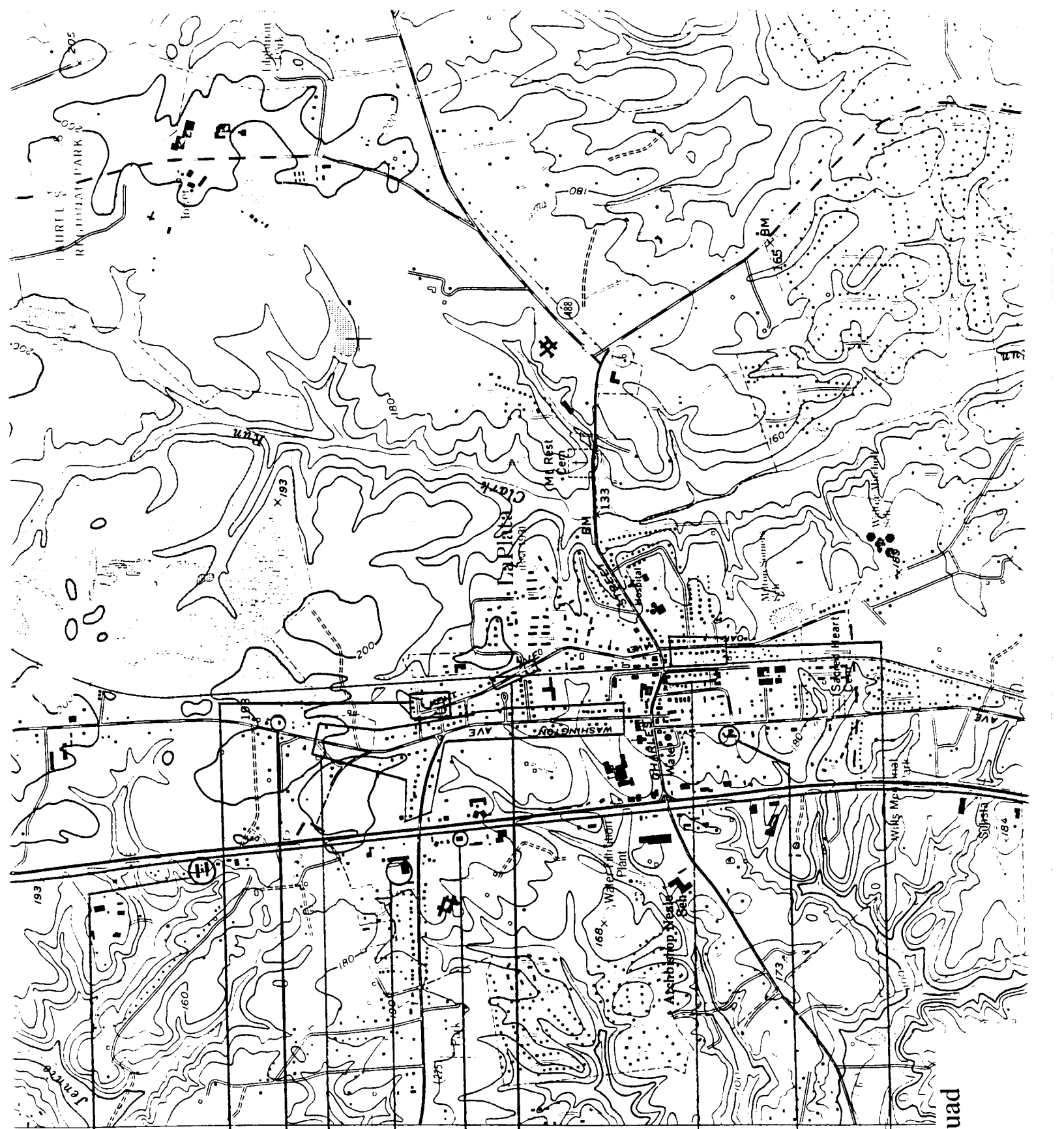
Charles County
Maryland

Resource Sketch Map #119
Not Drawn to Scale



CH:546 Willing Helper's Society Hall
1002 Washington Avenue
Charles County, MD
Parcel 110, Grid 8, Map 33
N ↑





- 5955 Crain Highway 4269
CH-544
- HARFORD STREET/HAWTHORNE DRIVE SURVEY DISTRICT CH-545
- 1002 WASHINGTON AVENUE 4268
CH-546
- WASHINGTON AVE ALIIE SURVEY DISTRICT CH-547
- 32'30"
- 4 WEST HAWTHORNE ROAD CH-548
- 6365 Crain Highway CH-549
- KENT AVENUE SURVEY DISTRICT CH-550
- MARPLE AVENUE SURVEY DISTRICT CH-551
- SACRED HEART CHURCH CH-552
- OAK STREET SURVEY DISTRICT CH-553

La Plata USGS Quad





CH: 546

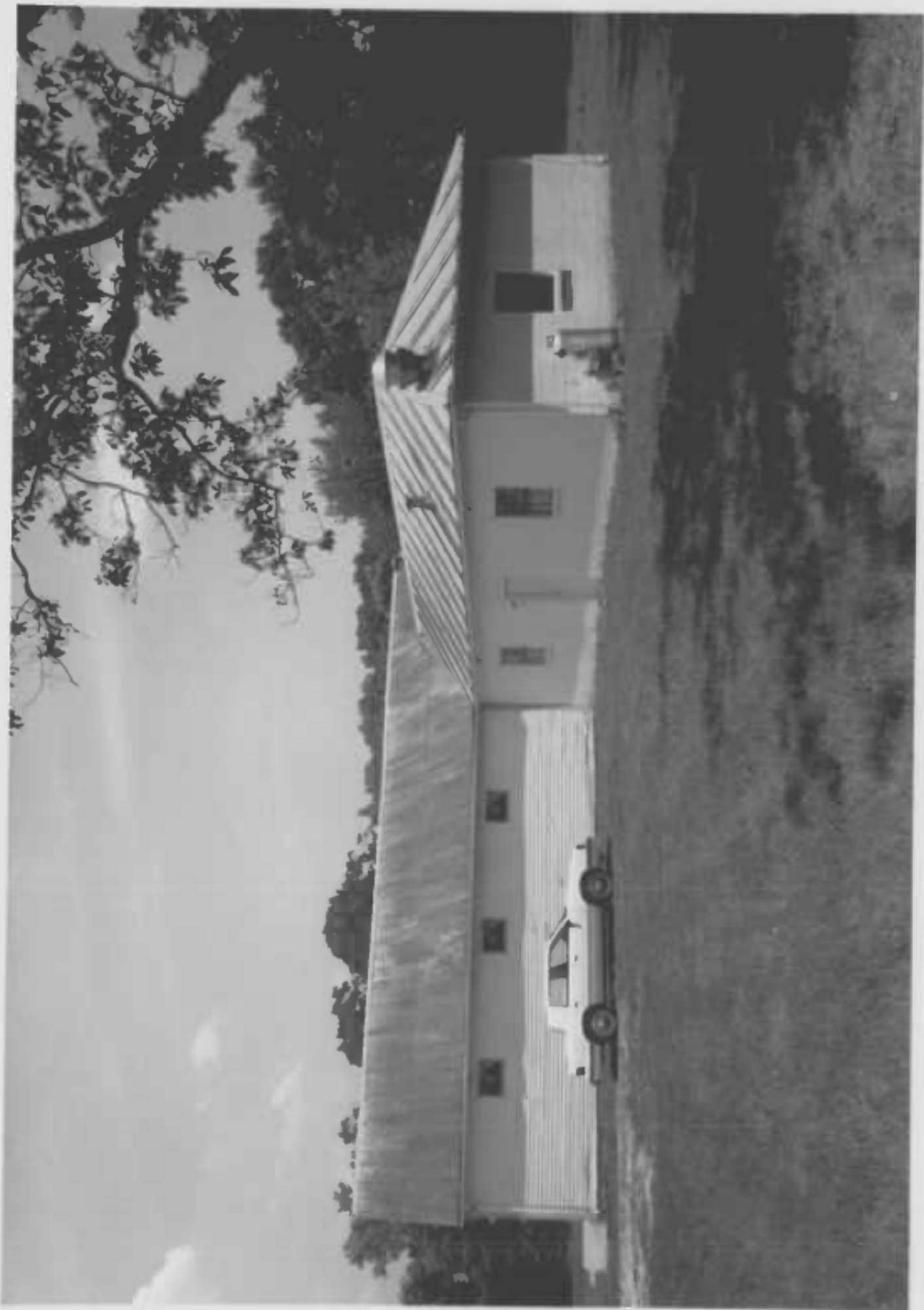
1002 WASHINGTON AVENUE
CHARLES COUNTY, MD
TRACERIES

JUNE 1999

MD SHPO

WEST ELEVATION, LOOKING EAST

1 of 4



CH: 546

1002 WASHINGTON AVENUE

CHARLES COUNTY, MD

TRACERIES

JUNE 1999

MD S41P0

SOUTH ELEVATION, LOOKING NORTH

2 of 4



CH:540

1002 WASHINGTON AVENUE
CHARLES COUNTY, MD

TRACERIES

JUNE 1999

MD SHPO

EAST ELEVATION, COOKING WEST

3 of 4



CH: 546

1002 WASHINGTON AVENUE
CHARLES COUNTY, MD

TRACERIES

JUNE 1999

MD SHPO

NORTH ELEVATION, LOOKING SOUTH

4 of 4