

CAPSULE SUMMARY

BA-3089

SPARKS AFRICAN AMERICAN SURVEY DISTRICT

1840-1950s

The Sparks African American Survey District is located in the Eighth District of Baltimore County. The Sparks African American community is centered around the Stephenson A.M.E. Chapel (BA-427). The church is an outgrowth of a cemetery established on the property in 1855 by Azahel Stephenson. A deed of 1866 mentions a church on the property however the current structure was not built until 1892. The 1877 Atlas of Baltimore County depicts the earlier Stevenson Methodist Chapel flanked by property owned by C. Ringgold and Reverend Matthews while the outlying lands are owned by members of the Price family. Only five dwellings are depicted on the 1877 map along the dirt road which was to become Quaker Bottom Road. The African American Sparks School was burned in 1890 and rebuilt in 1909. While the Price family still owns much of the surrounding land, twelve dwellings now flank the church along the south side of the road. The owners of these dwellings include Friese, Madden, Jackson, Wright, Woodhouse, and Ringgold.

A total of sixteen properties are associated with the survey district. Nine buildings are contributing and seven are considered non-contributing due to their age of less than fifty years. Quaker Bottom Road is a two-lane paved road with no shoulders that traverses through a wooded, hilly, rural landscape. Several of the dwellings are situated adjacent to the road and several buildings are set back, such as the Stephenson Chapel (BA-427) and Meeting Hall. The vernacular built fabric ranges in date from 1860 to the 1950s.

7. Description

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Condition

<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> deteriorated
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> altered

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

SPARKS SURVEY DISTRICT

The Sparks African American Survey District is located off York Road on Quaker Bottom Road immediately south of the town's center. Rural in character, this small enclave is centered on the Stephenson Chapel. A total of sixteen properties are associated with the survey district. Nine buildings are contributing and seven are considered non-contributing due to their age of less than fifty years.

Quaker Bottom Road is a two-lane paved road with no shoulders that traverses through a wooded, hilly, rural landscape. Several of the dwellings are situated adjacent to the road and several buildings are set back, such as the Stephenson Chapel (BA-427) and Meeting Hall. Each building is vernacular and does not depict a particular style contemporary to the time in which it was built.

The one-story Stephenson Chapel at 811 Quaker Bottom Road, has a rectangular footprint and is capped with a front-gable roof. Standing on a raised random-rubble stone foundation, this wood-frame church is clad with replacement vinyl siding. The rectangular footprint of the building is augmented with a gable vestibule centered on the façade. Rising above the asphalt-shingle roof is an interior brick chimney and an open-sided bell-tower. Above the vestibule piercing the façade is a half-round fixed window. The main block of the church measures three bays deep and has a gable-roof addition on the rear elevation. A datestone reads September 8, 1892.

The cemetery associated with Stephenson Chapel is sited directly to the south (rear) of the church building. Many of the headstones date from the 1880s prior to the construction of the church. The graves are not strictly organized in rows from front to rear but more haphazardly placed in small rows throughout the parcel. The headstones are made out of both granite and marble. Forms of the headstones range from rounded upright markers, obelisks, and flat upright markers. The cemetery continues to be in use by the present congregation.

Adjacent to the Chapel atop the same knoll is a two-story meeting hall associated with Stephenson Chapel. Dating circa 1892, the meeting hall measures three bays across, rests on a random-rubble stone foundation, and is topped with a side-gable roof. Constructed of wood-frame, this building is re-clad with asbestos shingles. Replacement 1/1 windows pierce the façade and a shed-roof addition is located on the west elevation.

Sparks School, 7 Stoddard Court, built in 1909 was converted to a single-family dwelling during the 1990s. The one-story school has a random-rubble stone structural system and foundation and is capped with a hipped roof. The south elevation is five bays wide with the two end bays containing single-leaf doors. The replacement 15-light doors are topped with large 12-light transoms. Each of the original 12/12 wood-sash windows have concrete square-edged sills and lug lintels.

Built circa 1860, one of the oldest dwellings is 819 East Quaker Bottom Road. This single-family house is set back from the road and is oriented to the west. Covered with stucco, this vacant house is one-and-a-half-stories high and measure two bays wide. Capped with a front-gable roof, this house is supported with a random-rubble stone foundation. Directly to the west of 819 East Quaker Bottom Road is a deteriorated dwelling that appears to have been constructed approximately the same time. This log house is supported with a random-rubble stone foundation, clad with vertical board siding, and erected with v-notch joints. Covered with a side-gable roof this two-story high dwelling measures three bays across.

Dating circa 1870, the dwelling at 723 East Quaker Bottom Road rises one-and-a-half-stories high from a random-rubble stone foundation and is clad with wood shingles. Above the side-gable roof is one center-interior brick chimney and one brick interior-end chimney. The shed-roof dormer on the façade contains a 6/1 wood-sash window.

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One form exhibited throughout includes the side-gable-roof plan from one to two-and-a-half stories in height. Built circa 1880, the single-pile dwelling at 929 East Quaker Bottom Road measures three bays wide and is constructed of wood frame. Standing on a random-rubble stone foundation, this house is clad with weatherboard siding and features a shed-roof porch across the façade. Rising above the asphalt-shingle roof is a center cross-gable dormer pierced with a casement window.

Dating circa 1910, 901 East Quaker Bottom Road is two-and-a-half-stories in height, three bays wide, features a center cross-gable roof, and is re-clad with aluminum siding. This wood-frame single-family house includes features such as a replacement concrete-block foundation, a two-light transom, and 6/1 wood-sash windows.

8. Significance

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Period	Areas of Significance	Check and justify below		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> health/medicine	<input type="checkbox"/> performing arts
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> invention	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-1999	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment/ recreation	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 2000-	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ethnic heritage	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/ settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> social history
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> community planning		<input type="checkbox"/> maritime industry	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation		<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

Specific dates	1880-1950 ca.	Architect/Builder	Unknown
Construction dates	1880ca; 1900 ca		

Evaluation for:

National Register

Maryland Register

not evaluated

Prepare a one-paragraph summary statement of significance addressing applicable criteria, followed by a narrative discussion of the history of the resource and its context. (For compliance reports, complete evaluation on a DOE Form - see manual.)

HISTORY

The Sparks African American Survey District is located to the southwest of the small town of Sparks in the Eighth District of Baltimore County. The Eighth District is bounded on the north by the Fifth and Seventh Districts, on the east by the Ninth and Tenth, on the south by the Ninth and Third, and on the west by the Fourth and Fifth Districts. It is the third largest district of the county covering over 62 square miles. As early as 1850, the village of Sparks and the road that connected it to Philopolis, were non-existent.(1) The land that later became the community, lying east of the Gunpowder Falls, was traversed only by a few farms. By 1877, Sparks Road had been constructed from York Road in Philopolis to its terminus at Carroll Road.(2) The village formed around the Sparks station along the Northern Central Railroad, and included only a school and a few dwellings along Sparks Road. In 1881, it had a population of approximately 6,000, which was down over a thousand from a decade prior. During this period, its primary source of income was its mining for iron ore, marble, and limestone. It also maintained numerous mills grist and saw mills in addition to paper factories.(3) By 1915, a post office was established in the village.(4) The Sparks State Bank was erected in 1916.(5) By the mid-20th century, the village of Sparks had declined. The area has come to encompass the neighboring community of Philopolis.

In 1835, Maryland Susquehanna Railroad built a track through Baltimore County and erected a station and located a switch near a large track of land owned by the grandfather of Laban Sparks. A public school was subsequently built at Sparks station. "After the public school was moved to Hunter's Hill on Quaker Bottom Road, Mr. Carroll Gorsuch was appointed teacher as Miss Brown retired. At present [circa 1940] this building is used for a colored school."(6) The Sparks School is located at the corner of Quaker Bottom Road and York Road. According to an interview with Robert Madden who attended Sparks School in the late 1940s and early 1950s, the school held grades one through seven. After the seventh grade students went to Hereford and East Towson to finish their high school education. The Sparks School was a two-room school divided by a curtain in the center. Madden was born and raised in a small house immediately east of 727 East Quaker Bottom Road. Later, this house was donated to the church and has fallen into ruins.(7)

The community may have emerged after the Civil War when slaves that worked at the nearby Ashland Furnace would have been freed. Also may be a settlement of slaves freed by the Quakers in the area.(8)

In 1850, along York Road were a cluster of dwellings and non-residential buildings such as a grist and saw mill, the J.B. Lamb Boarding School, the Philopolis Post Office, and several school houses, and a store. Among the residences in the area were several members of the Mathews and Price family, as well as W.T. Heston, H.M. Fitzhugh, W.H. Wheeler.(9)

The 1877 Hopkins Atlas denotes E. Parsons Milton Academy, a store, and a hotel owned by A. Shanebrook. The residences are

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noted with the names A. Shanebrook (noted twice), Josh Price (noted twice), T.R. Price, E. Price, Mrs. S. Barton, Mrs. Underwood, George Ensor, and E. Stewart. It also shows the village Philopolis with a cluster of buildings along York Road. P.H.F. Friese, William H. Price, Dr. Smith, and A&H. Fahnestock.(11)

The African American community of Sparks centered around the Stephenson A.M.E. Chapel (BA-427). The church is an outgrowth of a cemetery established on the property in 1855 by Azahel Stephenson. A deed of 1866 mentions a church on the property however the current structure was not built until 1892.(12) In 1867, the Stephenson Chapel was reported to have been the scene of an African American conspiracy meeting. (13)

The 1877 Atlas of Baltimore County depicts the earlier Stevenson Methodist Chapel flanked by property owned by C. Ringgold, and Reverend Matthews while the outlying lands are owned by members of the Price family. Only five dwellings are depicted on the 1877 map along the dirt road which was to become Quaker Bottom Road. (14) The African American Sparks School, mentioned earlier, was burned in 1890 and rebuilt in 1909.(15)

By 1915 Quaker Bottom Road had become much more developed. The Stephenson Church is depicted and further west along Quaker Bottom Road there is a parsonage. On the north side of Quaker Bottom Road there is what appears to be a school house, however, it is not labeled. While the Price family still owns much of the surrounding land, twelve dwellings now flank the church along the south side of the road. The owners of these dwellings include H. Friese, J. Madden, Jackson, Wright, Woodhouse, and Ringgold.(16)

At this time, 2002, there are approximately fifty members involved in the Stephenson Church congregation and Reverend James Pullum provides the services. No longer a resident in Sparks, Madden continues to travel to the village to attend services at Stephenson Church as do several out of town members. According to Madden's interview many of the same families for at least three generations continue to reside in the community.(17)

ENDNOTES

1. J.C. Sidney, Map of the City and County of Baltimore, Maryland, from Original Surveys (Baltimore, MD: James M. Stephens, 1850).
2. Atlas of Baltimore County, Maryland (Philadelphia, PA: G. M. Hopkins, 1877).
3. Scharf, p. 876.
4. Map of Baltimore County (Philadelphia, PA: G. W. Bromley, 1915).
5. Baltimore County Historic Inventory.
6. The Baltimore Sun, date of article is unknown but most likely dates in the late 1930s or early 1940s.
7. Interview with Robert Madden by Kristie Baynard, March 27, 2003.
8. John McGrain, Why are there African American Historic Settlements and Where are They? Unpublished, August 29, 1997.
9. Sidney Atlas, 1850.
10. Hopkins Atlas, 1877.
11. Bromley Atlas, 1915.
12. Maryland Inventory Historic Places form for BA-427, Stepsons A.M.E. Church.
13. Maryland Journal, July 13, 1867, p. 58.
14. Hopkins Atlas, 1877.
15. Baltimore Democrat, March 15, 1890 and "Sparks Black School," Hereford Magazine, Vol. 1 (December 1988), p 13.
16. Bromley Atlas, 1915.
17. Robert Madden Interview, March 27, 2003.

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OWNERSHIP AS OF 3/25/2003

- 811 E. Quaker Bottom Road -- map 34 parcels 260 and 142
Stephenson AME Church -- tax id# 819081651
Baltimore County Courthouse -- Liber 4300 Folio 200
- 817 E. Quaker Bottom Road -- map 34 parcel 141
Howard and Dorothy Dorsey -- tax id# 804051180
Baltimore County Courthouse -- Liber 15718 Folio 327
- 819 E. Quaker Bottom Road -- map 34 parcel 145
Robert S. Blake -- tax id# 820032360
Baltimore County Courthouse -- Liber 16439 Folio 288
- 827 E. Quaker Bottom Road -- map 34 parcel 144
Barbara J. Mosby -- tax id# 813075450
Baltimore County Courthouse -- Liber 14689 Folio 103
- 901 E. Quaker Bottom Road -- map 34 parcel 140
Lewis and Elizabeth Daughton, et al -- tax id# 804002040
Baltimore County Courthouse -- Liber 5246 Folio 728
- 929 E. Quaker Bottom Road -- map 34 parcel 316
Sparks State Bank -- tax id# 803051090
Baltimore County Courthouse -- Liber 9332 Folio 212

9. Major Bibliographical References

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See continuation sheet.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of surveyed property 23.65 acres
Acreage of historical setting Unknown
Quadrangle name Hereford, MD Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

Verbal boundary description and justification

The Sparks African American Survey District is located in Sparks in the Eighth District in Baltimore County. It has been historically associated with tax map 34 since its development in the late 19th century.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title	Kristie Baynard, Architectural Historian		
organization	E.H.T. Tracerics, Inc.	dat	3/24/2003
street and number	1121 Fifth Street, NW	telephone	202/393-1199
city or town	Washington	state DC	zip code 20001

The Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties was officially created by an Act of the Maryland Legislature to be found in the Annotated Code of Maryland, Article 41, Section 181 KA, 1974 supplement.

The survey and inventory are being prepared for information and record purposes only and do not constitute any infringement of individual property rights.

return to: Maryland Historical Trust
DHCD/DHCP
100 Community Place
Crownsville MD 21032
410-514-7600

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Atlas of Baltimore County, Maryland. Philadelphia, PA: G. M. Hopkins, 1877.

Baltimore County Historic Inventory.

Brooks, Neal A. and Eric G. Rockel. A History of Baltimore County. Towson, MD: Friends of the Towson Library, Inc., 1979.

Interview with Robert Madden by Kristie Baynard. March 27, 2003.

Map of Baltimore County. Philadelphia, PA: G. W. Bromley, 1915.

Maryland Inventory of Historic Places form for BA-427, Stephenson's A.M.E. Church.

Maryland Journal, July 13, 1867. P. 58.

McGrain, John. Why Are There Historic African American Settlements and Where Are They? Not published. August 29, 1997.

Scharf, J. Thomas. History of Baltimore City and County From the Earliest Period to the Present Day: Including Biographical Sketches of Their Representative Men. Philadelphia, PA: Louis H. Everts, 1881. Reprinted by Higginson Book Company, Salem, MA.

Sidney, J. C. Map of the City and County of Baltimore, Maryland, from Original Surveys. Baltimore, MD: James M. Stephens, 1850.





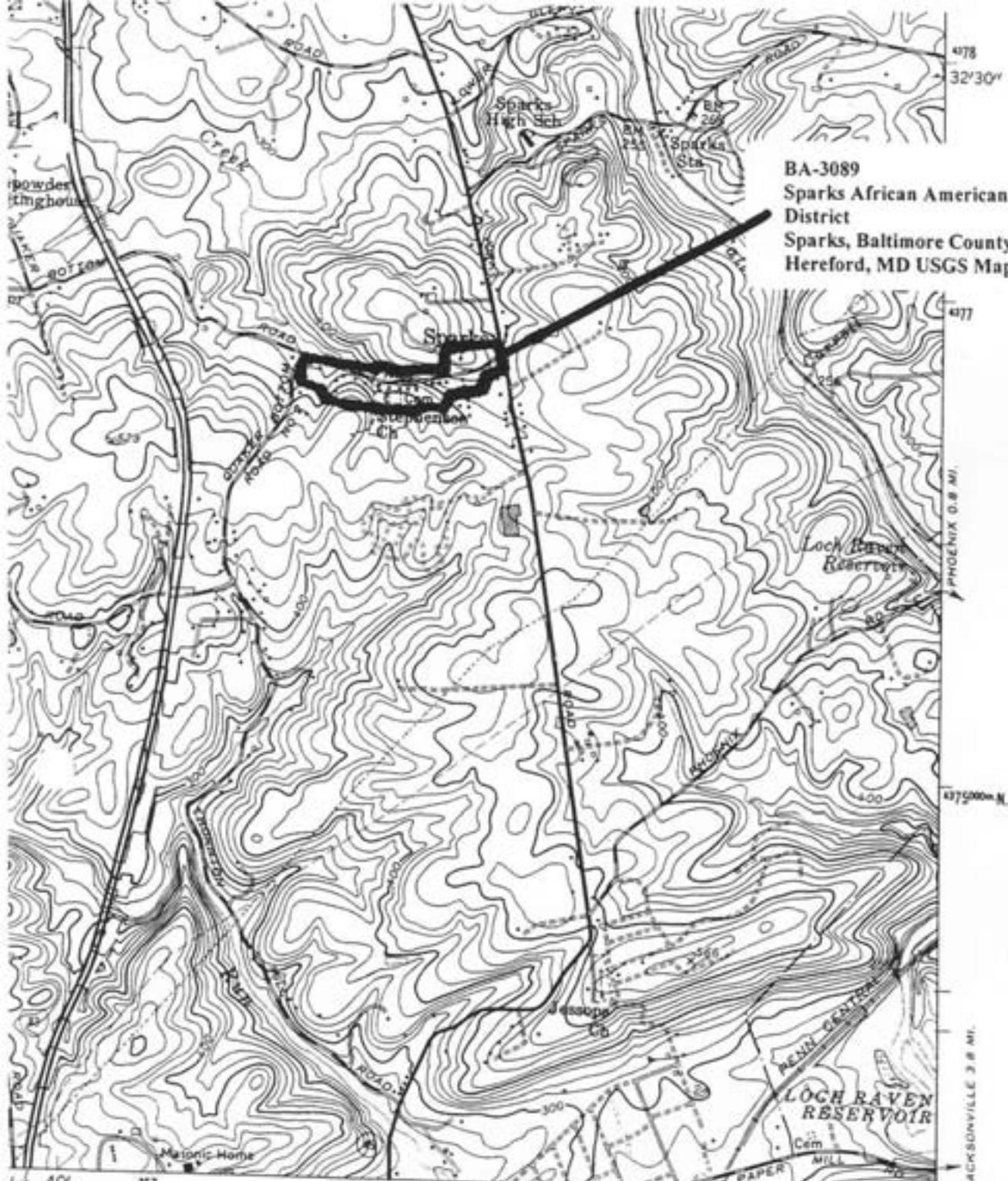












BA-3089
 Sparks African American Survey
 District
 Sparks, Baltimore County
 Hereford, MD USGS Map

40' 357 358 359 76°37'30" 1620000 E
 COCKEYSVILLE 1.3 MI
 TOWSON (COURTHOUSE) 7.4 MI
 COCKEYSVILLE 1.5 MI
 JACKSONVILLE 3.8 MI
 39°30'

ROAD CLASSIFICATION

- Heavy-duty —————
- Medium-duty —————
- Light-duty —————
- Unimproved dirt
- U. S. Route (rectangle symbol)
- State Route (circle symbol)



HEREFORD, MD.

N 3930—W 7637.5/7.5
 1958
 PHOTOREVISED 1974
 AMS 5663 II SW—SERIES V833



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 Sparks African American Survey
 District
 Sparks, Baltimore County
 County Base Map with Boundaries

